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INDIAN BALLADS

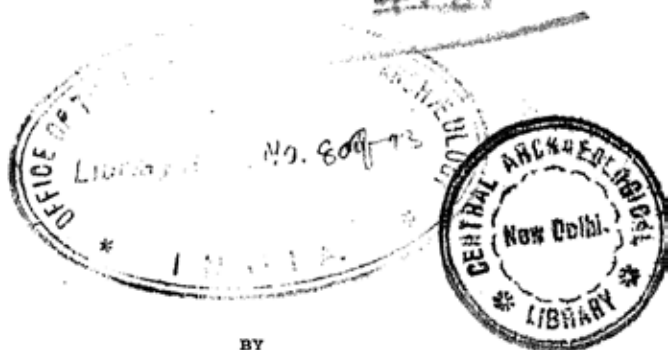


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INDIAN BALLADS



BY

WILLIAM WATERFIELD

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DEDICATION.

WHAT gallant ship that sailed for summer skies,
And twice would cross the misty-slumbrous Line,
Was richlier freighted with her merchandise,
Than we who carried love and prayers of thine ?
What bring we back ? Ores from a golden mine,
Where Love Who left the joy that never dies,
To save a world and gladden weary eyes,
Through dross of mortal passion still will shine ?
Or pearls of human faith and constancy,
Prahlada's firmness—Sita ever true—
And the sweet love of plighted Rukmini ?
And be the venture great, the profits few,
Thou wilt not reckon harshly for thy due,
Nor slight the poor return we render thee.



CONTENTS.

PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD	...	...	...	...	i-vi
HYMN TO USHAS (AURORA)	...	...	...	...	1
HYMN TO INDRA	...	...	...	...	4
THE SACRIFICE OF DAKSHA	...	...	...	...	7
THE SONG OF THE KOIL	...	...	...	...	14
THE CHURNING OF THE OCEAN ..	...	...	...	...	18
THE FOURTH AVATARA	...	...	...	...	26
THE LAMENTATION OF AJA	...	...	...	...	50
THE LAST ORDEAL OF SITA	...	...	...	...	53
SHARMISHTHA	...	...	...	...	61
AMBA	...	...	...	...	68
THE STORY OF THE SYAMANTAK JEWEL	...	...	...	...	75
RUKMINI	...	....	...	...	86
THE DESTRUCTION OF YADAVAS	...	...	...	...	89
THE SONG OF KALINDI	...	...	...	...	130
THE PILGRIM'S RETURN FROM HARIDWARA	...	...	...	...	134
THE MORAL OF HISTORY	...	...	...	...	139
THE FORCE OF NATURE	...	...	...	...	143
TO THE KALKI TREE	...	...	...	...	145



PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD.

These ballads which have been long out of print were well known to oriental scholars in the sixties and seventies of the last century. Their author, Mr. William Waterfield (Sanskrit चारिक्षेत्र which he was fond to use) was one of those members of the Indian Civil Service who studied Sanskrit and other Indian languages with great thoroughness. The poem "A DREAM" printed below shows his command over fourteen different languages.

A DREAM.

C'EST une vallee verte et belle,—

Where it lies I may not tell,

Sive sit in Tempe, vel

Far beyond the sea,

5. La ou l'île Hesperienne

Holds a rest for perfect men,

Hoson erga kala en

Les jours de la vie.

Ita tamen fit, ut sæpe,

10. When my eyes are worn and sleepy,

Se upabaner samipe

Pass I in my dream

Sur un char des vents je saute,
And through fleecy clouds I float

15. On thæt æthele gemot
Mibb'ney hamm' lakim.

Kai entautha he selene
Clare splendet ac serene,
"Ala ghusni 'lyasimini,

20. Und des Sommers See :
And the placid waters brighten
Wo die Elfenschifflein gleiten,
Atque inter Nymphas Triton
Sings across the bay.

25. Dalon men se kabhi bina,
Con armonia divina,
Arboreta per amœna
Rend ses tristes sons ;
Where the lamps of living flame,
30. Que la fee du bocage aime,
Yeman pransampanna hem,
Pharpharâte hon.

Soon, too soon, must break the spell
Traum verschwindend allzu schnell !

35. Vision frele autant que belle !
Oh that I might sleep on,
"Ala 'ddawam ki bibinam,
Supra, cœlum tam serenum,
Niche, desham shokabinam,
40. Hos ekeinon kepon !

In the preceding lines there are specimens of fourteen languages. Verses 1, 5, 8, 13, 28, 30, and 35, are French ; 2, 4, 6, 10, 12, 14, 21, 24, 29, 33, and 36, are English ; 3, 9, 18, 23, 27, and 38, are Latin ; 7, 17, and 40, are Greek ; 11 and 31 are Bengali ; 15 is Anglo-Saxon ; 16 is Hebrew ; 19 is Arabic ; 20, 22, and 34, are German ; 25 is Hindi ; 26 is Italian ; 32 is Urdu ; 37 is Persian ; and 39 is Sanskrit.

In reading the Oriental languages, the vowels are pronounced as in Italian, except that a is like u in English (but in Bengali like o) ; the consonants are pronounced much as in English (but in Bengali y is like j, and s like sh ; n is nasal.

The following is a literal translation of the lines :—

It is a green and beautiful valley,—
Where it lies I may not tell,
Whether it be in Tempe, or
Far beyond the sea,
Where the Western Island
Holds a rest for perfect men,
Whose deeds were honourable in
The days of their life.

Thus however it happens, that often,
When my eyes are worn and sleepy,
Near to that garden

Pass I in my dream ;
On a chariot of the winds I leap,
And through fleecy clouds I float
To the noble assembly

Of the sons of the kings.

And there the moon
Shines brightly and serenely,
On the branch of the jasmine
And the summer sea :

And the placid waters brighten
 Where the little fairy-boats glide,
 And among the nymphs Triton
 Sings across the bay.

From among the branches sometimes the lute,
 With divine harmony,
 Through the pleasant groves
 Gives forth its sad sounds ;
 Where the lamps of living flame,
 Which the woodland fairy loves,
 Like gold possessed of life,
 May be twinkling.

Soon, too soon, must break the spell !
 Dream vanishing all too quickly !
 Vision frail as beautiful !

 Oh, that I might sleep on,
 So that I may constantly see,
 Above, a heaven thus calm,
 Beneath, a country free from sorrow,
 As that garden !

His love for India and Indian institutions
 may be gathered from the following pieces :—

CRAMBO.

[Question—Where were you brought up ? Word to be introduced—Pundit.]

WHERE o'er the storied shrines of saints
 Religion weds with Beauty ;
 Where to young hearts Tradition paints
 The loyal path of duty ;

Where Statesmen and where Prelates found
The earliest steps of learning ;
Where, met again in hallowed ground,
Their frames to dust are turning ;
Where, if aught base or vile abode,
The very air had shunned it ;
Where founts of learning ever flowed,
Enough to make a Pundit.

ALLAHABAD.

NOVEMBER, 1865.

AROUND thy birth-place glide
The sisters blue and brown ;
Each rolls her laughing tide,
The weary land to crown :
But they may not abide ;
Their waters ebb away ;
And thou, too, from our side
Didst pass as they.

The trees, that saw thy birth,
Were bright with fragrant bloom
Their blossoms strewed the earth,
And knew not of thy tomb :
The season of their mirth
Was brief, however gay ;
And thou, too, from our hearth
Didst fade as they.

The streams which winter dries
 Shall swell with melting snows,
 And summers new shall rise
 As other summers rose :
 But thou didst reach the skies,
 Nor know a wintry day ;
 And thou shalt glad our eyes
 Once more as they.

The ballads conclude with the following
 SONNET.

Kind breezes waft them on their homeward way
 Across the perilous sea and sultry strait ;
 Thou ship, sail swiftly with thy priceless freight ;
 Hide, gentle clouds, the force of flaming day ;

Angels, on innocence and love that wait,
 Relax no care for sin of mine, that they,
 In safety brought to happy meeting, may
 New mercies with new thankfulness relate.

Easter is come, but where my sweetest rose ?
 Easter is come, but where my opening flower ?
 My Lent is lengthened through the joyous days :
 I watch, but still the brimming river flows.
 Light of my life, may the endless Easter hour
 Yet find us hand in hand to sing our songs of praise.

Like Sir William Jones and H. T. Colebrooke, Mr. Waterfield was also a botanist of no mean merit. He was for many years Accountant-General of the N.-W. P. and won the esteem and affections of his subordinates by his courtesy and kindness to them gratefully remembered to this day.

INDIAN BALLADS

HYMN TO USHAS (AURORA.)

(From the "Rig Veda.")

[The hymns of the Vedas are addressed chiefly to natural objects. An attempt has been made, while giving some of the most poetical ideas, to retain the simplicity of style and irregularity of metre.]

1.

USHAS I praise
Of the brilliant rays,
Who hath dwelt in heaven of old.
The gates of the sky,
As the sun draws nigh,
Her lovely hands unfold.

2.

Goddess of Morn,
Heavenly-born,
Many-tinted, enrobed in white,
A hundred cars
Dost thou lead to the wars
Thou wagest for us 'gainst the bands of Night.

3.

Thou ledest the crowd,
Like a warrior proud,
Whose march is in the van;
For the realms of Night,
With thy weapons of light,
Thou art conquering back for man.

4.

From afar, from afar,
Dost thou harness thy car,
Beyond the bright sunrise;
As thy course proceeds
On thy purple steeds,
Thou gladdenest mortal eyes.

5.

To the golden-eyed¹
Thou com'st as a bride
Whom her mother's hands adorn:
The demons of Night,
Who would mar our rite,
Are chased by the breath of Morn.

6.

Glad cries are heard
From beast and bird,
The bounteous goddess knowing;
With truthful voice
Doth each rejoice
To greet the All-bestowing.

¹ The sun.

7.

For wealth or fame,
Or a holy name,
The sons of men are striving ;
Their slumber they break
When thou dost wake,
At thy silent call reviving.

8.

Thou old, yet ever young !
Unchanged all change among !
Thy journeyings who may number ?
As a matron wise and fair
Intent on housewife care,
Thou rousest thy sons from slumber.

9.

Call the labourers from rest ;
Call the birds from out their nest ;
Call the priest to the hall of praise ;
But let the niggard sleep
In the dark unlovely deep,
Afar from thy lightning rays.

10.

They all are past and gone
On whom thou erst hast shone,
And thou shalt shine on those who see not yet the light ;
But ours the present day ;
Then, ere it roll away,
The favour of the gods let us with prayers invite.

HYMN TO INDRA.

[Indra is the Jupiter of the Hindus, the representation of the visible firmament. He is therefore attended by the forty-nine winds. (It was prophesied to Indra that Marut, the wind, would be too powerful for his control. He therefore struck him with his thunderbolt, dividing him into seven fragments, and again, crosswise, each of these into seven. Thus the whole are never united, but counteract each other.)

He is also lord of the rainbow and the thunderbolt, and of the thousand eyes or stars, though a later legend has been invented to explain this title.

He is, again, like Jupiter, leader of the gods in their wars with the Titans; and one of his most common names is the "Render of Cities." Maya, or illusion, is among the strongest weapons in the superhuman armoury of the Hindus.

He is, lastly, King of Swarga, the temporary Paradise of the good, with its immortal city, Amaravati, and its five celestial trees.

But, to do the Hindus justice, and show how superior their creed is, in scheme, to that of Greece and Rome, it must be explained that no hymns later than the Vedas would be addressed to Indra, or any but the Supreme Deity, either in one of the persons of the Triad, or in an incarnation or energy (imaged as the consort) of one of the latter. Nor would they look, as the object of their hopes, to Swarga, which, after a period of enjoyment to the senses proportioned to merit, leads to other births in an earthly state. The only reward considered worth obtaining is union with the Supreme Spirit, and the emancipation from the troubles and temptations of a mortal existence.]

1.

God of the varied bow!
God of the thousand eyes!
From all the winds that blow
Thy praises rise;
Forth through the world they go,
Hymning to all below
Thee, whom the blest shall know,
Lord of the skies!

2.

Rending the guilty town,
Leading celestial hosts,
Hurling the demons down
To the drear coasts:
Still with thy lightning frown
Winning thee wide renown,
Till the wild waters drown
All their proud boasts.

3.

Whom thy dread weapon finds,
Striking the mark afar,
Them thy just anger binds
In the fierce war:
Rebels! their frenzied minds
Thus thine illusion blinds,—
Seven times seven winds
Wafting thy car.

4.

So, by the fivefold tree,
Where the bright waters run,
We, who impurity
Heedfully shun,

In Amaravati,
Indra, shall dwell with thee,
From earth's pollution free,
When life is done.

5.

God by the gods obeyed,
Hear thou our feeble cry!
Lend us thy sovereign aid,
Lord of the sky!

Of our fierce foes afraid,
Fainting, distressed, dismayed,
To thy protecting shade
Hither we fly.

THE SACRIFICE OF DAKSHA.

[This is a favourite subject of Hindu sculpture, especially on the temples of Shiva, such as the caves of Elephanta and Ellora. It, no doubt, is an allegory of the contest between the followers of Shiva and the worshippers of the Elements, who observed the old ritual of the Vedas, in which the name of Shiva is never mentioned.]

DAKSHA for devotion

Made a mighty feast ;
Milk and curds and butter,
Flesh of bird and beast,
Rice and spice and honey,
Sweetmeats, ghi and gur,³
Gifts for all the Brahmans,
Food for all the poor.

At the gates of Ganga³
Daksha held his feast ;
Called the gods unto it,
Greatest as the least.

All the gods were gathered
Round with one accord
All the gods but Uma,⁴
All but Uma's lord.

³ Ghi : clarified butter. Gur : molasses.

³ Gates of Ganga : Haridwar (Anglice, Hardwar) where the Ganges enters the plain country.

⁴ Uma : a name of Durga, Gauri or Parvati, wife of Shiva, and, in one of her births, daughter of Daksha. Her attendant is the lion.

Uma sat with Shiva
On Kailasa^a hill;
Round them stood the Rudras^b
Watching for their will.

Who is this that cometh,
Lilting to his lute?
All the birds of heaven
Heard his music, mute.

Round his head a garland
Rich of hue was wreathed;
Every sweetest odour
From its blossoms breathed.

'Tis the Muni^c Narad;
'Mong the gods he fares,
Ever making mischief
By the tales he bears.

"Hail to lovely Uma!
Hail to Uma's lord!
Wherefore are they absent
From her father's board?

^a Kailasa : the paradise of Shiva,—the "Calasay" of Southey.

^b Rudras : demigods, attendant on Shiva.

^c Muni : a sage,—Narada, though a holy personage, often appears in a discreditable situation, and is cursed with a restless spirit, which leads him to wander about, mischief-making by his news. He is the instructor of the Gandharbas, or heavenly musicians,—the "Glendoveers" of Southey.

"Multiplied his merits
Would be truly thrice,
Could he gain your favour
For his sacrifice."

Wroth of heart was Uma ;
To her lord she spake :—
"Why dost thou, the mighty,
Of no rite partake ?

"Straight I speed to Daksha
Such a sight to see :
If he be my father,
He must welcome thee."

Wondrous was in glory
Daksha's holy rite ;
Never had creation
Viewed so brave a sight.

Gods, and nymphs, and fathers,
Sages, Brahmans, sprites,—
Every diverse creature
Wrought that rite of rites.

Quickly then a quaking
Fell on all from far ;
Uma stood amidst them
On her lion car.

"Greeting, gods and sages,
Greeting, father mine !
Work hath wondrous virtue,
Where such aids combine.

"Guest-hall never gathered
Goodlier company
Seemeth all are welcome,—
All the gods but me."

Spake the Muni Daksha,
Stern and cold his tone:—
"Welcome thou, too, daughter,
Since thou com'st alone.

"But thy frenzied husband^a
Suits another shrine;
He is no partaker
Of this feast of mine.

"He who walks the darkness
Loves no deeds of light;
He who herds with demons
Shuns each kindly sprite.

"Let him wander naked,—
Wizard weapons wield,—
Dance his frantic measure
Round the funeral field.

^a Shiva bears on his forehead a crescent and the river Ganges. He wears a necklace of skulls, and girdle, bracelets, &c., of serpents. He is often naked in other respects, except that he smears his body with ashes, and flings over his shoulders a raw elephant's hide. He is attended by blood-thirsty goblins, and is the patron of magical rites in burning grounds, of crazy fanatics, &c.

"Art thou yet delighted
With the reeking hide,
Body smeared with ashes,
Skulls in necklace tied?

"Thou to love this monster!
Thou to plead his part!
Know the moon and Ganga
Share that faithless heart.

"Vainly art thou vying
With thy rival's charms:
Are not coils of serpents
Softer than thine arms?"

Words like these from Daksha
Daksha's daughter heard;
Then a sudden passion
All her bosom stirred:

Eyes with fury flashing,
Speechless in her ire,
Headlong did she hurl her
'Mid the holy fire.

Then a trembling terror
Overcame each one,
And their minds were troubled
Like a darkened sun;

And a cruel Vision,
Face of lurid flame,
Uma's Wrath Incarnate,
From the altar came.

Piendlike forms by thousands

Started from his side ;

'Gainst the sacrificers

All their might they plied :

Till the saints availed not

Strength like theirs to stay,

And the gods distracted

Turned and fled away.

Hushed were hymns and chanting ;

Priests were mocked and spurned ;

Food defiled and scattered ;

Altars overturn d. —

Then, to save the object

Sought at such a price,

Like a deer in semblance

Sped the sacrifice.

Soaring toward the heavens,

Through the sky it fled ;

But the Rudras chasing

Smote away its head.

Prostrate on the pavement

Daksha fell dismayed :—

“ Mightiest, thou hast conquered ;

Thee we ask for aid.

“ Let not our oblations

All be rendered vain ;

Let our toilsome labour

Full fruition gain.”

Bright the broken altars
 Shone with Shiva's form ;
 " Be it so ! " His blessing
 Soothed that frantic storm.

Soon his anger ceases,
 Though it soon arise ;—
 But the Deer's Head* ever
 Blazes in the skies.

* The Deer's Head is the constellation Orion.

THE SONG OF THE KOIL.¹⁰

O YOUTHS and maidens, rise and sing !
The Koil is come who leads the spring :
The buds that were sleeping his voice have heard,
And the tale is borne on by each nesting bird.

The trees of the forest have all been told ;
They have donned their mantles of scarlet and gold ;¹¹
To welcome him back they are bravely dressed,
But he loves the blossoming mango best.

The Koil is come, glad news to bring !
On the blossoming mango he rests his wing ;
Though its hues may be dull, it is sweet, oh ! sweet,
And its shade and its fruit the wanderer greet.

The Koil is come, and the forests ring :
He has called aloud to awake the Spring,—
Spring the balmy, the friend of Love,
The bodiless god who reigns above.¹²

¹⁰ The Koil is the Indian cuckoo.

¹¹ The Dhak, silk cotton, and coral trees are covered with red blossoms before the leaves appear.

¹² Ananga, the bodiless,—a common name of Kama, explained by this legend. (See also "Destruction of the Yadavas : " stanza 40.)

Oh ! sad were the hearts of the gods that day
 When the worlds all mourned the oppressor's sway ;
 When the oracle promised deliverance none
 Till Shiva the wrathful should lend his son. ¹³

But Shiva the wrathful he recked not of that
 Where on Himavan's ¹⁴ site as a hermit he sat ;
 And there was not a dweller on Meru ¹⁵ would dare.
 To break his devotion, and show him their prayer.

Yet not even the frown of Destruction could awe
 The loveliest form that Creation e'er saw ;
 Eternal in youth, he thought it fou shame
 That the Eldest of Beings dishonoured his name.

He hath mounted his parrot that flashed in the sun ;
 He hath pointed with blossoms his arrows each one ; ¹⁶
 Of the sweet, sweet cane he hath shapen his bow ;
 And his string is of bees in a long black row.

Soon Kama is come to the Being he sought ;
 His visage was haggard with watching and thought ;
 His body was lean, and his limbs were shrunk ;
 His colour was wan, and his eyes were sunk.

His thick black locks in a knot were tied ;
 His loins were wrapped with a tiger's hide ;
 His skin with ashes was smeared and grey ;
 And spread beneath him a deer-skin lay.

¹³ Taraka ; a demon who was not to be overcome, except by a son of Shiva, who had then neither son nor wife.

¹⁴ Himavan, the snowy ; the same as Himalaya, the house of snow.

¹⁵ Meru ; the mountain on which stand the palaces of the gods.

¹⁶ Five arrows, barbed with five different flowers.

He moved not, nor spoke, save in telling his beads
 On the rosary strung of the jungle seeds ;¹⁷
 Yet his head was awful, a god's to view,
 And gemmed with the moon and the Ganges' dew.

And little did Shiva the wrathful care
 For the flag which flaunted so bravely there ;
 Though the fish¹⁸ was flashing with jewels and gold,
 He moved not his eyes, and his beads he told.

But archly does young-eyed Kama smile
 On those who would foil him by force or by guile
 And his keenest shaft to the string he laid,
 As he called to that presence the mountain-maid.¹⁹

The love-shaft flew from the bow-string fast,
 As the child of the snows in her beauty passed ;
 And the cream-white lotus²⁰ blushed rosy red
 Where the blood of the god from his wound was shed.

Oh ! sharp is the arrowy blossom's smart,
 For the mango flower ne'er missed the heart ;
 And the work of the gods is fairly done,
 And help shall arise out of Shiva's son.²¹

¹⁷ Rudraksha, *Eleocarpus ganitrus*. Shiva's head is adorned with the moon and the Ganges.

¹⁸ The fish is the banner of Kama.

¹⁹ Parvati, the daughter of the mountain (Himalaya), in which character the Queen of Shiva was born again after her death in the sacrificial fire (See the "Sacrifice of Daksha.")

²⁰ There is a red lotus as well as the white.

²¹ Kartikeya, the god of war.

But woe for that image of loveliness, woe !
Which the worlds of creation no longer shall know ;
In Shiva's first wrath at the breach of his vow,
Consumed by the flame-darting eye of his brow.²²

But the flames could not weaken Immortal Might
He is born in the heart²³ in the spring-time bright.
Whose is the breast where the god shall dwell ?
O youths and maidens, you can tell.

²² The centre eye in the forehead, always a mark of Shiva.

²³ Heart-born, another of Kama's names.

THE CHURNING OF THE OCEAN.

SAD and bitter was the season,
In the lonely days of yore,
When the mighty demon's treason
Vexed the world from shore to shore :

When the Suras²⁴ were but mortal,
And they fell by force or guile :
While the Asuras²⁵ to Heaven's portal
Near and nearer drew the while.

Came the gods by Brahma bidden—
Doubt and dread in every face ;
Long they held a council hidden—
Strait and evil seemed their case.

Vishnu prayed they then to save them
Only him their trust they made :
Deep the counsel which he gave them,
When they looked to him for aid.

When they left the realms of pleasure,
"Know ye not, Asuras wise,"
Thus they said, " the priceless treasure
Ocean hideth from our eyes ?

²⁴ Suras—gods or demigods, of whom Indra is the king.

²⁵ Asuras (those who are not Suras),—their opponents, the Titans, or demons.

" Sweet is life the while one liveth,
 But death cometh soon or late;
 Win with us the draught which giveth
 Life exempt from change of fate.

"If to churning of the ocean
 Our united strength we bring,
 From the swift and swirling motion
 Will that virtuous liquor spring."

Then they made a pact between them,
 Gods and demons in that tide;
 Joyously did they demean them
 As they laboured side by side.

Mandar first, that mighty mountain,
 From his roots they wrenched and tore;
 Him with tree and rock and fountain
 For their churning-staff they bore.

Shesha^{2*} next, the hundred-headed,
 World-support—the Serpent King—
 Round the mountain him, the dreaded,
 Wound they for their churning string.

Still their work remained unready;
 For their staff support they lack,
 Till by Vishnu's grace 'twas steady
 On the eternal Tortoise^{2†} back.

^{2*} Shesha : see stanzas 44 and 45 of the "Destruction of the Yadavas."

^{2†} The tortoise is the second Avatara of Vishnu.

But the demons, danger scorning,
Heedless seized the poison head,
While the gods at Vishnu's warning
Safely grasped the tail instead.

So they ranged their ranks asunder ;
So they toiled with might and glee :
When was ever heard a wonder
Like the churning of the sea

Eager strove they, struggling, straining ;
Round the mountain whirled and swung ;
Shesha writhed, the task disdaining ;
High their crests the billows flung.

White the width of waters boiling
Roared and burst around the hill :
Ocean, all the labour foiling,
Battled for his treasures still.

Lo ! at last the waves are breaking !
Lo ! a prize of marvel won !
From his manes the foam-drops shaking,
Sea-green courser of the sun.²⁸

Lo ! Airavata's²⁹ form stupendous !
'Tis the beast that Indra rides,
Spouting from his trunk tremendous
Fountains o'er his monstrous sides.

²⁸ The chariot of the sun is drawn by a horse with seven heads ; according to other accounts, by seven horses. (See "Fourth Avatara," stanza 39.)

²⁹ Airavata, Indra's elephant.

Cow of plenty,³⁰ boon-bestowing,
 Yieldeth now the rifled sea :
 Now with sweetest blossoms blowing
 Swarga's³¹ first and fairest tree.

Eager strove they, struggling, straining ;
 Round and round the mountain swung ;
 Shesha gasped, the toil sustaining ;
 Loud the thundering echoes rung ;

Whirled the waste of waters raging ;
 White and wide the yeasty froth ;
 Ocean fiercer warfare waging
 Held his treasures still in wrath.

Forms of brightness, silvern, golden,
 Moon and sun by turn appear :
 They by Soma, Surya, holden,
 Rule the changes of the year.

Vishnu gained his lustrous jewel,
 Conch and disc³² instinct with life ;
 Shiva won that weapon³³ cruel
 None but he can bend in strife ;

³⁰ Kamadhenu or Surabhi : see "Destruction of the Yadavas," stanza 4.

³¹ Parijata, one of the five trees of Swarga or Paradise. (See "Hymn to Indra.")

³² Disc, Sudarshana : see "Destruction of the Yadavas," stanza 5.

³³ Shiva's bow : see Introduction to "The Last Ordeal Sita."

Shadowy shapes of perfect beauty"⁴

Form amidst the creaming foam;

Nymphs who—meed of warrior's duty—

Make the Swarga bowers their home.

Eager strove they, struggling, straining;

Round the mountain whirled and swung;

Shesha panted, uncomplaining;

Flames from rocks and bushes sprung;

Billows raging, roaring, raving;

Stirred the waters' utmost deep;

Ocean's foamy banners waving

Still their choicest treasures keep.

Dhanwantari, ⁵⁵ sage physician,

Next his priceless casket brings—

Healing hand, if ill condition

E'er might touch celestial things.

Now a vision comes enthralling—

Lakshmi comes, the queen of grace;⁵⁶

Gods and demons prostrate falling

Bow before that lovely face.

By the charmer unaffected

Sura or Asura stood not one;

Thus by rival hands neglected

All their toil was nigh undone.

⁵⁴ The Apsarasas. The resemblance to the legend of Venus Aphrodite is striking.

⁵⁵ Dhanwantari, physician of the gods.

⁵⁶ Lakshmi : see "Fourth Avatara," stanzas 7 and 8.

Slow, more slow, was Mandar turning :

Calmer grew the angry main :
Ocean from the fearful churning
Deemed the prize his own again.

But the demons fainter growing
Could not win so fair a bride ;
She, herself her hand bestowing,
Seated her at Vishnu's side.

Eager strained they, struggling, striving ;
Round and round Mount Mandar swung :
Shesha, drooping, scarce surviving,—
On his jaws the poison hung.

Nigh those jaws of horror gaping
All the demons faint and tire,
Till beyond control escaping
Burst around the stream of fire.

Then had earth and sky been blasted,
Then the seven oceans blazed,
Had the flaming torrent lasted—
While the gods in stupor gazed—

But that Shiva, strong in aiding,
Drained himself the fatal draught ;
While the throat-stain ³⁷ never fading
Shows how fierce a cup he quaffed.

³⁷ Shiva is called Nilakantha or Blue-Throat. (See "Amba," stanza 6.)

Lo, once more a sight surprising !
Lo, two maidens side by side !
Each amid the waters rising
Bears a beaker from the tide.

Roaring sink the seas defeated :
Rests the serpent : stands the hill :
All their labour now completed,
Let the toilers take their fill.

Then the Asuras dazed and hasting
Seized the larger, fairer flask ;
While the gods the Amrita ³⁶ tasting
Gained the profit of the task.

Yet each eager demon seeker
Boasted loud—" the prize is mine ;" ³⁷
For from that deceitful beaker
First was poured the enchanter, Wine.

³⁶ Amrita. The same word as Ambrosia, the draught of immortality.

³⁷ The reckoning of the fourteen jewels is not always the same. Some lists omit the Sun and Vishnu's quoit, counting the nymphs and the poison among the jewels. Instead of the horse of the Sun and the bow of Shiva, they mention those of Indra. Now the first incarnation was the fish which guided the ark over the waters of the deluge ; and this of the tortoise, which was the second, is said by some to have been manifested in order to recover the treasures lost in the ocean during the flood. To this tradition the bow of Indra, which is the rainbow, seems appropriate. The fatal discovery of wine immediately succeeding the deluge is also a remarkable point in the legend.

Only of the Amrit flagon
One more wary tasted too,—
Rahu—spite his shape of dragon—
Mingled with the Sura crew.

Surya soon the craft espying,
Vishnu cleft his form in twain :
But the head ⁴⁰ lives on undying—
Mortal yet the fish-like train.

Sun and moon his hate pursuing
Chases ever night and day :
Woe for earth's and man's undoing,
Should he seize them on their way !

⁴⁰ Rahu, the head, and Ketu, the tail of the dragon, are the ascending and descending nodes in astronomical mythology. And hence the origin of eclipses.

THE FOURTH AVATARA.

1.

SING we to him who reigneth on high,
The first of the sacred three : ⁴¹
In the world beneath, and the earth, and sky,
As far as the golden walls ⁴² extend
Where light must vanish and life must end,
Is none so great as he.

2.

Sing we to him whose couch is borne
By the many-headed snake : ⁴³
By elemental discord torn,
Nature her rest must take,
Midst the world of waters wide
Tossing round on every side,
Till the god his slumbers break,
When the destined hour is nigh,
And bid a new creation wake
To life and energy.

⁴¹ The followers of Vishnu of course exalt him to the chief place in the Triad.

⁴² One tradition of Hindu cosmogony represents the whole universe to be enclosed in a golden shell ; hence it is commonly called the egg of Brahma.

⁴³ During the interval between two cycles of creation, Vishnu is said to sleep on the chaotic ocean, resting on Shesha, the thousand-headed king of the serpents.

3.

All-preserving, all-creating,
 All-destroying he ; ⁴⁴
 From his essence generating
 All things that e'er shall be.
 Nought is done
 Beneath the sun,
 Within the golden wall,
 But he, before the worlds begun,
 Hath predetermined all.

4.

Still the work he loveth best
 Is to give the weary rest;
 To remove, in mortal birth,
 The burdens of the groaning earth ;
 And with resistless arm to free
 His followers who, in good or ill,
 Shall hold their faith unshaken still,
 Few and feeble though they be ;
 For those who look to him for aid
 Nought on earth shall make afraid.

5.

'Twas thus he humbled Bali's pride, ⁴⁵
 Spanning the skies at a single stride :
 And to earth the Vedas gave,
 Hidden long in ocean-cave,

⁴⁴ Here Brahma and Shiva are represented as merely other manifestations of Vishnu.

⁴⁵ The fifth Avatara, or incarnation, is that of the dwarf, who begged from Bali a boon of three paces of land. In the first

Till the conflict dire was ended:
 And, the holy king to save,
 From out the all-destroying wave
 His radiant horn extended.

6.

Sing we the deeds of the Ramas three,⁴⁶
 With ploughshare, axe, and bow :
 Of him in vest of blue arrayed,
 The wielder of the awful blade,
 The spouse of Revati :
 Of him who cleft the house of snow,
 Where, through the deep and winding length,
 The sacred waters flow
 Of Ganga rushing in her strength
 Upon the world below ;

he took the earth, and, in the second, heaven ; but, on Bali's submission, he refrained from depriving him of Patala, the subterraneous region, where Bali accordingly reigns still.

The third Avatara was that of the boar, who dived and brought up on his tusks the earth and the Vedas, both sunk in the ocean by the giant Hiranyaksha (the Ermaccasen of Southey).

The first Avatara was the fish, which preserved Manu at the time of the deluge. The vessel of the king was fastened to his horn, and guided safely through the ocean.

" Parashu Rama (or Rama with the axe), Ramachandra, and Balarama, were the sixth, seventh, and eighth (or ninth) Avatara. The last was armed with a ploughshare ; he is brother of Krishna, and husband of Revati. The first destroyed the Kshatriyas, or military caste, twenty-one times, in revenge for the murder of his father, Jamadagni, the hermit ; and with his axe he opened a way for the Ganges, through the Himalaya, or house of snow. Ramachandra, of the solar dynasty, was Prince of Ayodhya (Oudh),

Who, in his righteous ire,
 Unnumbered hosts o'erthrew,
 And, to avenge his slaughtered sire,
 The haughty tyrants slew :
 Or last, of him, Ayodhya's boast,
 Who bridged the roaring deep ;
 Who quelled the demon host,
 Though their arms were mighty, their walls
 were steep,
 And on the barbarous coast
 Undying fame did reap.

7.

By his side
 His radiant bride,
 Lovely Sita,⁴⁷ lotus-eyed ;
 From the giant's fierce embrace,—
 Sorely tempted, sorely tried,—
 Rescued by the monkey race ;
 Ever constant, ever true,
 From the sea of milk descending,
 Each various incarnation through,
 His glorious steps attending.

the modern Fyzabad. His wife Sita was carried off by the ten-headed giant Ravana, who reigned in Lanka (Ceylon) ; Rama pursued him with an army of bears and monkeys (probably the wild tribes of the South, as the Aryan race and Brahman religion were long confined to the north of the Vindhya Mountains) ; to rescue Sita, they are supposed to have built Adam's Bridge from the continent to the island.

⁴⁷ Sita is an incarnation of Lakshmi, who reigns with Vishnu as his queen, upon the milky ocean.

8.

Most precious of all treasures she ⁴⁸
That rose from out the teeming sea,
When the gods and demons strove
The cup of life to gain ;
From every land
The heavenly band
Of watchers thronged her hand to obtain ;
Yet, well discerning Vishnu's love,
She went with him to reign.

9.

But, when misfortune on her cast
Suspicion and evil blame,
The ordeal strange she passed
To clear her injured name ;
High-hearted in her purity,
She dared the raging flame ;
Like the wind that blows
From the mount of snows
The holy fire became,

"Lakshmi, goddess of prosperity, was one of the fourteen treasures obtained from the sea when the gods and demons churned it to obtain the Amrita, or water of immortality (the demons, however, for their share were put off with wine) ; the churning staff was Mount Mandara resting on the tortoise, the second Avatara ; and the rope was the serpent Shesha held at the head by the demons and at the tail by the gods. So great was Lakshmi's beauty that the guardians of the eight points of the compass became her suitors ; but she selected Vishnu. (See "The Churning of the Ocean.")

When Sita was rescued from Ravana, she underwent the ordeal of fire to prove her purity, to which also all the gods bore witness, raining flowers upon her. (See "The Last Ordeal of Sita.")

And, from their self-moving cars on high,⁴⁹
 The heavenly powers
 Rained down flowers,
 And sang her spotless fame.

10.

Yet, best we love to sing
 The universal King,⁵⁰
 When, for his faithful servant's good,
 Beneath the tyrant's sway oppressed,
 Clad in his yellow vest,
 The god in lowly guise
 A simple herd-boy stood,
 In Vrinda's holy wood ;—
 O chief of mysteries,
 Hard to be understood !

11.

His lotus eyes
 Our hearts surprise
 From his face of the cloud-dark hue ;⁵¹
 As the stars shine bright
 Through the purple night,
 Or the sea-fire flashes its living light
 From the ocean's depths of blue.

⁴⁹ The Vimana is the animated vehicle of the gods. (Southey's "ship of the gods.")

⁵⁰ Krishna is by some considered the ninth Avatara ; by others, who look on Buddha as the eighth, assumed to mislead the wicked, he is regarded as an emanation from the Deity, distinct from, and superior to the ten Avataras. He was fostered among the herdsmen of Vrinda, to conceal him from the usurper Kansa, who knew that Krishna was destined to destroy him. One of the names of Vishnu is "yellow-robed."

⁵¹ Krishna means dark-blue ; and he is always represented of a black colour, as is well known from the representations of Jagannath.

12.

But a fiercer form he bore
In the evil days of yore,
When every region groaned beneath a tyrant's sway ;
When every living thing
The golden-mailed ⁸² king
Acknowledged as supreme to worship and obey.

13.

So great the penance done,
By Diti's ⁸³ mighty son,
A wondrous gift he won
From the Creator's hand :
O'er earth he ruled, and sea, and skies,
And made the trembling deities
Within his palace walls in menial garb to stand.

None might strive with him in fight
Beneath the eye of day ;
None beneath the clouds of night
Might the wicked Raja slay ;
He no hostile form need doubt
In earth, or sky, or sea ;
Within his palace and without,
From death or danger free ;
Man, and beast, and form divine
Vainly should 'gainst him combine.

⁸² Golden-mailed—Hiranyakashipu, or golden armour—the
"Errenen" of Southey.

⁸³ Diti was mother of the Daityas, or Titans.

14.

But with such power entrusted he
Waxed wanton in his pride ;
And with a frantic jealousy
The friends of Vishnu eyed.

15.

Where shall be found, oh ! where,
One faithful earnest heart,
Unblenchingly to dare
The torture's fiery smart,
And raise a suppliant prayer
Before the eternal throne ?
O fools ! by worldly threatenings cowed,
Before a mortal's feet they bowed,
And rendered him the worship proud
They owed to one alone.
The Brahmans misinterpreted
What truths the Vedas taught :
The people, by their priests misled,
No real wisdom sought :
The Scriptures were no longer read :
None made the ablutions due ;
The expectant manes were not fed ;
The poor no helper knew ;
The Gurus ¹¹ were dishonoured
The holy kine were slain ;
For far and wide doth evil spread
Beneath an evil reign.

¹¹ Gurus are spiritual teachers.

16.

On those who slight the god's command,
 What vengeance shall he do ?
 Shall floods destroy the impious land,
 And overwhelm the world anew ?
 Or shall the clouds of thunder, big with woes,
 That bring the iron age's fearful close,
 Amidst the affrighted skies
 Before their time arise ?
 Or shall the obedient trees again
 Hear their Creator's word, as when
 His mandate bade them sweep
 O'er hill and desert, rock and fen,
 With rapid growth unchecked, till men
 Were forced into the deep ? ⁵⁵
 The breezes had no power to blow,
 And all that fearful shade below
 Was silent as the tomb :
 The restless sands did forests know,
 And Himavan ⁵⁶ his crest of snow
 Veiled with a verdant plume ;
 So close the countless trunks were set,
 And interlacing branches met,
 The earth with rain was never wet,
 No ray dispelled the gloom ;

" It has been suggested that the tortoise which supports the world—the third Avatara—may be a tradition of the great fossil tortoise found in India. Can this be an allusion to the coal epoch ?

" Himavan, the snowy, is the same as Himalaya, the house of snow.

Till from their vigil in the seas
 The saints ⁵¹ arising reached the bank,
 And, where they passed, the conscious trees
 Before their awful presence shrank.

17.

The lord of mercy deemeth not
 All evil and unsound,
 If still one unpolluted spot,
 Unscathed by sin, be found.
 He sees, amongst the Raja's train,
 One incorrupt of heart remain
 Amidst the tempters round.
 Before Hiranyakashipu ⁵²
 Though princes bow and sages sue,—
 Though all the earth adore,—
 Unmoved by worldly pomp, his eye,
 Endued with wisdom from on high,
 To Vishnu's throne beyond the sky
 Hath learned in faith to soar.

18.

The monarch's son, Prahlada styled,
 Of guilty sire the guiltless child,—
 Him no temptations could o'erwhelm,
 Still faithful found when tried,—
 The heir to all his father's realm,
 But not his father's pride.

⁵¹ Saints—the Prachetasas—ten patriarchs who spent 10,000 years in the sea in meditation, during which time the trees over-spread the earth. On their return they destroyed the forests by the wind and flame of their anger.

⁵² Hiranyakashipu : see stanza 12.

19.

The pleasures of a royal state
Have made e'en sages fall ;
The threatenings of the earthly great
Cause saints from right to deviate ;
He knew how vain our mortal fate,
And overcame them all.

His sire none more obedient knew,
Yet served he not beyond the due
Of fathers and of kings ;
His heart was set on wisdom true,
From Vishnu's self that springs.

20.

" Son," said the king, " no longer praise
Those puny gods of other days,
Whose power has passed away ;
A mightier sceptre than the old
(Which thou thyself perchance may'st hold)
Do all the worlds obey.

Or, if they still some reverence claim,
Through Shiva, not through Vishnu's name,
Thy vows will most avail ;
He was a mighty prince indeed ;
His acts of vengeance we may read
In many an ancient tale.

But, on his distant lotus-seat
Enthroned with his bride,
Lies Vishnu in oblivion sweet,
Nor heeds the world beside.

If thou wouldst praise him, thither go ;
For not within these realms below
Shall he, our race's deadliest foe,
By thee be glorified !"

21.

To him Prahlada answer made :—
" Father, in all things be obeyed
 (As best beseems) thy will ;
But, when my eyes behold the land,
And view the workings of his hand,
 How can my tongue be still ?
And how can I associate
 With Shiva's sullen train,
Who weave before his temple-gate,
Their frantic dance, or meditate
 Within the awful fane ?

22.

" It was not from the will of their master's might
That the earth in its loveliness golden bright,
And the changeful weft of the day and night,
And the heavens whose glories are infinite,
 Into young creation burst :
He loveth the blood of the mystic rite,
And he smileth on men as they rush to fight,
 Like demons for gore athirst :
In the funeral field, with fiend and sprite,
 He worketh his orgies dire,
As they dance around by the spectral light
 Of the slowly-fading pyre.

When the fight is done,
'Neath the setting sun,
He hastes with his horrid train:
He quaffs the blood,
In a ghastly flood
As it lies on the battle-plain;
And he loves to bedeck
With skulls his neck,
As he strides o'er the heaps of slain.

23.

" But Vishnu seeks to bless
The earth with happiness,
As in his yellow dress
He roams the woodland shades;
'Tis there he spends the sunny hours;
Leader of Heaven's benignant powers,
He haunts the groves and forest bowers,—
His necklace, of the forest flowers,—
His train, the forest maids.
Kind to the poor, and mercy's lord;
How well such names accord
With true devotion, the preserver's claim!
No penance fraught with fear,
To gloomy Shiva dear,
Shall have such power above
As pure and earnest love,
And faith on Hari's⁵⁹ name.

⁵⁹ Hari is the most common of the names of Vishnu.

Thus Vishnu doth fulfil
To each his separate will
Of honour, wealth, or fame ;
But if, puffed up by power and pride,
From truth and right they start aside,
Compassionate, not even then
His mercy fails the sons of men :
Before misfortune's chilling blast
Down from their dizzy greatness, cast,
They turn to him again.

24.

" Yet he those paths of danger never knows,
On whom the god his chiefest favour shows ;
Who gives no boon
Decaying soon,
But saves from lasting woes,
And union with himself through future time
bestows.

25.

" For countless wealth, or magic might,
Or wondrous charms, or strength in fight,
Or universal reign,
To Mahadeva⁶⁰ be thy suit
All worldly blessings as its fruit
Thy penance shall attain.

⁶⁰ Mahadeva, the great god—Shiva.

But they who Vishnu serve,
Nor from his precepts swerve,
Though poverty the lot they must endure on earth,
Among the spirits blest,
Dwell in untroubled rest,
Absorbed in his divinity, exempt from future birth."

26.

Scarce the concluding word
The king of giants heard,
And marked Prahlada's faith, by menace undeterred;
"Chiefs of my host," he cried, "obey,
And with the traitorous wretch away,
Who dares acknowledge in my realm a rival to my sway."

27.

Straight at their monarch's call
Attendant in the hall,
Appeared the demon chiefs, of mighty stature all.
Prahlada shrank not, but his eye
Unquailing raised he to the sky,
As though he said,—
"By Vishnu's aid
Your warriors I defy."

28.

"Strike!" cried the monarch; but in vain
The weapons fall, and fall again:
They swerve aside, nor reach his steadfast breast
As rowers, when with sinewy strain
They strive some sheltering isle to gain,—
Hurled by the eddies to the roaring main,
In mute despair the weary oarsmen rest.

29.

"Away with these!" the angry Raja cries,
"The fire a surer punishment supplies."
Then forth the unresisting prince they drew :
An unseen power the flames obedient knew,
 And parted wide
 On either side,
And wreathed their waving coils around,
 As though an arch of triumph they supplied,
And his most holy head with glory crowned.

30.

The tiger slunk away
Before the intended prey :
Unharm'd, in faith did he the cup envenom'd drink :
Hurled from the mountain precipice's brink,
 As soft he sank to rest,
 On the earth's rocky breast,
As the descending lark doth sink,
Her hymn of thanks complete, upon her nest.

31.

The learned Brahmans came,
Before the sacred flame
 They wrought their sorceries dread :
The spirit feared to face
The shield of Vishnu's grace,
And shrieking smote the sorcerers in his stead.

32.

Thereat a voice was heard so soft and clear,
It thrilled the heart with love and fear :

“ Well hast thou done ;
Thy prayer, whate'er it be, I hear,
Ask thou a boon, my son.”

Prahlada due obeisance made,
And thus with reverent voice he said :—

“ If such be in thy will,
Though these their lofty birth abuse,
The works of righteousness refuse,
And seek thy saints to kill ;

Yet in thy mercy-loving breast
Short time do wrath and anger rest ;

Think, they are Brahmans still :
Upon them look with pitying eye :
Forgiven, they from sin may fly,
And leave the paths of ill.”

33.

Up rose the Brahmans then,
And they spake before the king :

“ Ours is the strength of men,
And their aid thy demons bring.

But with thy holy son
In vain would we contend ;
For his righteousness hath won
The Eternal for his friend.

Him, Raja, do not thou forget ;
Though long his anger sleep,
Rebellious princes never yet
Destruction failed to reap.

His shafts of vengeance are not spent,
Though mercy bids them wait:
Unless thou dost in time repent,
Thou shalt—when all too late."

34.

" Then let him live, since live he must,
Till he shall loathe to live;
Till all the joy of living rust,
Craving, from him he made his trust,
The death he cannot give.

Bear him, ye demons, far away ;
Beneath the ocean's utmost deep,
Where never reached the light of day,
Let him and all his treasons sleep.

With mountains piled above his head,
Sunk in the water's oozy bed,
Unseen and unremembered,
How can his doctrines further spread ?"

35.

There many a day
Prahlada lay,
While rocks above him tower ;
Rain and sunshine, night and day,
Undistinguished roll away,
Hour succeeding hour.

He heard not the music, soft yet dread,
 Which the billows were making far overhead :
 He saw not the fitful shadowy light
 (Like the struggling moon on a cloudy night),
 Which plays on many a hidden gem,
 Meet for Varuna's ⁶¹ diadem.

But on Vaikuntha's ⁶² lord,
 In silence best adored,
 So firmly had he fixed his bosom's every chord,
 He knew no thought of weary care,
 Aye wandering through those regions fair
 Which Lakshmi's self delights to bless,—
 Lakshmi, the queen of happiness.

36.

As one who lieth bound in sleep
 In some enchanted isle,
 Lulled by the sound of streams which sweep
 O'er pebbly channels to the deep,—
 But he dreameth on the while :

He rideth again
 To the battle-plain,
 As he rode in the days of old ;
 He graspeth the band
 In his stalwart hand,
 And the glorious flag of his native land
 To victory doth unfold :

⁶¹ Varuna is god of the sea.

⁶² Vaikuntha is Vishnu's paradise.

Or he speedeth away to a lonely tower,
 And he sitteth once more in his lady's bower,
 While the bright sunbeam,
 Like a golden stream,
 Comes floating in through the lattice high,
 Where the sweet woodbine
 And the jessamine
 Hang in an odorous canopy.
 For who wills to be free, him none shall enthrall,
 Since a freedom there is which surpasseth all,
 The freedom of the mind:
 The tyrant's chain, and the sorcerer's charm,
 May fetter the hand and unnerve the arm,
 But the spirit they cannot bind.

37.

While twice twelve times the gods and manes drained
 The silver bowl that radiant Soma ⁶³ gained,
 Bound in his rocky prison the prince remained.
 But little the power of faith he knows
 Who deems Prahlada stilled for aye :
 The rocks were rent, and the captive rose,
 And breathed the air of upper day.

38.

What can heal the blindness
 Of rash and headstrong pride ?
 Although the king with kindness
 His son returning eyed,

⁶³ Soma is the god of the moon. During the former half of the month, the moon is supposed to be filled with amrita or nectar, which is drunk by the gods and fathers during the latter half.

Yet to the god by whom,
In his dungeon of doubt and gloom,
That son was still protected,
His homage paid he not :
The warnings were neglected ;
The wonders all forgot.

39.

'Twas evening, and the sun was low ;
His rays of glory brightly shone
The softly rippling waves upon,
That shorewards ceaseless flow :
As though a stream of gold
Its liquid treasure rolled
To bathe the coursers seven,⁶⁴
All weary of their race through the high vault of heaven.

40.

Beneath the palace gate,
With pillars wrought of antique stone,
Carved with the exploits great
Of those old kings who held the throne
Of Diti's sons,—alone
Prahlada and the Raja sate.
The prince perceived the sinking ray,
And rose the simple rites to pay,
Due from the pious ere the day is done.

⁶⁴ The sun's chariot is drawn by seven green horses, the seven days of the week.

As he went forth, his father bade him stay:

“ Leave me not yet, my son,
Thy Vishnu, how can he
From far Vaikuntha see

One rite the less performed on earth ?
Or is thy master so severe
That one neglect outweighs the worth
Of all good works performed through many a year ?”

41.

“ Who serveth Vishnu well, for love him serveth,
Not for reward,” Prahlada made reply:
“ If by delusion led from right he swerveth,
To his preserver contrite let him fly.

But how can he forgiveness hope to win,
Who falls rebellious into wilful sin ?
And deem not he in heaven alone abides,
Whose spirit nature's countless workings guides ;
Whether in whirlwinds and in storms he rides,

Or bids the seasons roll the appointed year,—
Or whether he descends to scan
The secrets of the heart of man,
Vishnu is present here.

For know, our spirits' inmost thought
Is unto him as surely known
As act in that effulgence wrought
Which beams around his lotus throne.”

42.

The king a glance of anger cast,
And on the portal's column vast
Struck down his massive mace :—
“ And is he here ? Then let my foe
His form disclose, that we may know
Whose might should rule the world below,
Whom serve the human race.”

43.

He struck; the stone asunder flew,
And Hari's self appeared to view,
In form of awe and dread ;
No look with heavenly beauty graced,
No glance of mercy could be traced ;
But, on a human body placed,
Appeared a lion's head.

Vain was the strife, and vain escape ;
Back to the chasm the fearful shape
His struggling victim led :
And, as the guilty spirit fled,
On the far mountain's top the sun's last ray was
shed.

44.

Thus the reign of evil ended :
Thus did vengeance conquer pride :
Though he, by magic charms defended,
Earth and heaven alike defied,

Yet was the web with craft designed
By Vishnu's might asunder rent,
For wickedness is ever blind,
And leaves a way for punishment.

45.

Sing we to him who shall yet return⁶⁵
In our season of utmost need ;
With a meteor flash his sword shall burn,
As he mounts on his snow-white steed.
With the hosts of the wicked he war shall wage,
A victor from shore to shore ;
And the earth from the stains of the iron age
To virtue and peace restore.
For the wisdom of old in vain we seek,
Perplexed in fear and doubt,
And the hearts of men are all too weak
To work their salvation out ;
And the infidel bands are increasing fast,
And the faithful oppressed and slain—
When shall the fated days be past,
And our help return again ?

⁶⁵ Stanza 45. The tenth Avatara, yet to come, is that of Kalki, or the swordsman mounted on the white horse.

THE LAMENTATION OF AJA.

From the Raghuvansha, or Chronicle of Raghu's Line.

[King Aja, son of Raghu, and grandfather of Rama, was married to a nymph, enchanted to the form of a mortal princess. Her spell was to cease when she met the flowers of her native paradise. Accordingly, when the king and queen were walking together in the wood, Narada^a happened to pass, and a gust of wind carried his garland to the breast of the queen, on which she swooned and died.]

My own, my loveliest,
I clasp thee to my breast,
A lute with chords unstrung;
Hushed is thy music tone,
An evening lotus lone,

No bee to murmur deep its snowy leaves among.

Hath beauty power to slay?
Could blossoms sweet and gay
Destroy this perfect form?
Ay! softest natures oft
Death smites with weapons soft;

Snow-rills the lotus kill, which braved the pelting storm.

This wreath of vakul^b sweet
Remaineth incomplete,
We plaited hand in hand;
Thou didst begin the rite
These graceful trees to unite,^c

But now their yearning boughs must long unwedded stand.

^a Narada: see note 7, on the "Sacrifice of Daksha."

^b Vakul: *mimusops elengi*.

^c It seems to have been a favourite amusement of the Hindu ladies to unite by a marriage ceremony two of the trees in their gardens

The Ashoka's⁹⁹ fertile shoot,
 Of thy sweet touch the fruit,
 Its flowers above thee weeps;
 I thought to bind thy hair
 With those red blossoms fair;
 How can they deck the pyre whereon my darling sleeps?
 The Chakravaka¹⁰⁰ soon
 Rejoins his mate; the moon
 Brings joy once more to night:
 These wait and trust, but I
 Look vainly to the sky,
 Which mocks my hopes with winds that wave thy ringlets
 light.

Thy tinkling girdle pressed
 So close thy gentle breast,
 It knew each secret beat;
 Now on thy heart it lies,
 Silent its melodies,
 As though its spirit still went with its mistress sweet.

A bitter tear-mixed draught
 Must by thy shade be quaffed
 For wine of glad desire:
 A couch of leaves new-spread
 Was once too harsh a bed;

How will thy tender limbs endure the cruel pyre?

⁹⁹ Ashoka: the *Jonesia Asoca*, said to flower when touched by a lady's foot. (See note 184 to the "Destruction of the Yadavas," stanza 11.)

¹⁰⁰ Chakravaka, the Brahmini duck; the Indian emblem of conjugal affection.

Thy voice the Koils¹ show,
Thy timid glance the doe,
To lighten my distress ;
The swans thy stately pace,
The wind-waved boughs thy grace ;—
But these are not my love, and I am comfortless.
My light is fled to-day ;
My glory wanes away ;
My state a joyless throne ;
My songs henceforth have ceased ;
My year is void of feast ;
My brave array is lost ; my couch is dark and lone.
Had I offended aught,
Thy gentle heart no thought
Of anger felt to me :
Why are my prayers unheard ?
Without one farewell word,
To leave thine only love, who never loved but thee !
Thy friends were true each one ;
An orb'd moon thy son ;
Thy husband, thine through life.
Oh ! what to me is left,
By death of thee bereft,
The partner of my joys, my friend, companion, wife ?

¹ Koil, the Indian cuckoo.

THE LAST ORDEAL OF SITA.

[The story of Sita, the sweetest heroine in all pagan story, should be told by a chief of poets, not a mere translator of ballads. Still, in a collection of Indian legends, it could not be altogether omitted.

Dasharatha, King of Ayodhya (Awadh or Oudh), had, by his three wives, four sons. The eldest of these, Rama, repaired to Mithila (Tirhut), the court of King Janaka, who had promised the hand of Sita—daughter of the earth, but found and adopted by him—to that competitor who should bend the bow of Shiva, which was preserved in his family. Rama not only bent but broke it, and thereby won the princess, but also incurred the hostility of Parashu Rama² or Rama with the axe, a warlike saint, and declared enemy of the warrior caste, of whom he saw in Rama the champion, as well as the contemner of his patron, the god Shiva. But Rama vanquished him, on his challenge to a trial of skill in archery, by striking a revolving mark, at which he might only aim by its reflection in a vessel of oil. On Rama's return, he was to be inaugurated as successor to the throne; but his stepmother claimed two boons formerly promised by her husband, and selected the inauguration of her own son Bharata, and the banishment of Rama for fourteen years. Rama accordingly went into exile with his wife and half-brother Lakshmana, who refused to leave him. The king soon afterwards died of grief, and Bharata hastened to recall Rama; but the latter refused to transgress the word of his dead father, so Bharata placed Rama's shoes on the throne, governing as his vicegerent. Meanwhile, Rama and his companions journeyed on with many adventures, and at last settled by the source of the Godavari, near

² Parashu Rama : see note 46 to the "Fourth Avatara," stanza

Nasik, the holy city of the Deccan. Here Ravana, the ten-headed giant, who ruled Lanka, or Ceylon, and had subdued even the gods and elements to his will, beguiled both Sita's protectors from her side by the semblance of a golden deer; and then, presenting himself as a pilgrim perishing of thirst, persuaded her to leave the safe limits of her hut to assist him, when he carried her off to his palace. There Rama at last discovered her, with the help of his allies, the monkeys and bears (no doubt the aboriginal tribes who inhabited the woods and hills of the South). These built Adam's Bridge, to enable him to cross the Straits; and, after several battles, Ravana was slain, and Sita delivered. She, however, could not be received by her husband, till she had proved her purity by the ordeal of fire, when the gods rained flowers on her, and transported the party in a heavenly car to Ayodhya. Upon their arrival Bharata resigned the government, and they dwelt happily till Rama, on hearing that his subjects blamed him for taking back a wife who had been so long in the power of the ravisher, determined to put her away; and when, shortly before the birth of her sons Kusha and Lava, she expressed a wish to revisit the banks of the Ganges, the scene of her first wanderings, he desired Lakshmana to leave her there. So she dwelt in the hermitage, and Rama reigned solitary and remorseful. But, when some years after he held a great sacrifice in an assembly of all the citizens without the walls, he was attracted by the appearance of two noble youths, who sang the Ramayana, or history of his own exploits. On his inquiring their birth, they introduced the hermit and their mother, who proved to be his long-banished Sita.]

YES, Rama, it is I : behold again

Her who was once thy wife, thy widow now,
Long years exiled from happiness and thee ;
And happier those who widows are indeed,
Whom duty bids not to survive their lords,
And drag out lingering years on earth alone.

Yet am I not all cheerless in my woe :
I still may learn thy deeds, still hear thy name
A wonder and a praise on lips of men.
And I am still the mother of thy sons,
Thy sons and worthy thee,—worthy to fill
Thy throne hereafter, blessing the earth with rule.

There is no sin, no crime 'gainst God or man,
But has its penance fitted to the case,
And not to be exceeded. What for me ?
Is't not enough, these weary, weary years ?
Is there no memory of our early love,
And the long trouble we together bare ?
Dost not remember all my joy and pride,
When sceptred kings contended for this hand,
And thou didst conquer :—and that fearful day,
When I beheld, with terror and with prayers,
How the destroyer of the warrior race
Despised thy youth and spurned thy courtesy,
But went back humbled ? So, while, blest by all,
The bridal train moved home triumphantly,
There fell the cruel writ of banishment :
And thou, my noble Rama, murmuredst not,—
Thou heldest years of poverty and toil
Less evil than to break a father's oath,
Though rashly given. Nor did I put off
The bracelets of my marriage,¹³ newly bound :
I could not dwell in palaces alone,—

¹³ A wife may not wear her ornaments in her husband's absence. Claspings the bracelet is a part of the marriage ceremony.

I, chosen by the crown of Raghu's race.¹⁴
 By pathless ways, through woods and wilds we went ;
 O'er rocks and rivers, and the haunts of beasts,
 Supported by thy love, I journeyed on.
 And oh ! how happy was our woodland life,—
 To weave thy forest garb, to dress thy meal,
 To rest in peace while sweet Godavari
 Lulled us with murmurs down her rocky bed !
 Oh, that thou wert a simple forester,
 And I thy love ! Thy love ? I am thy love,
 And thou the noblest king that ruleth right,
 And meteth justice to a hundred tribes.
 Then would I rob thee of thy high estate,
 And leave the nations to a meaner lord ?
 So were there slanders true, mine exile just ;
 For no true wife is she, though chaste and pure,
 Who loves herself before her husband's fame.

Yes, I transgressed ; was it so grave a crime ?
 I could not see him perishing for thirst,
 An old, frail man, and clad in holy weeds.
 I thought not of thy warning, and the wiles
 Of that deceiver, source of all our woe.
 I crossed the safe enclosure of our hut.
 Then straight the giant showed his monstrous form ;
 He seized me, calling vainly on thy name,
 And bore me trembling o'er the hills away.

" " Chosen by the crown of Raghu's race : " literally, the tilaka, or mark impressed on the forehead at consecration. The powder with which it is made is still sent to the Hindu princes, on their accession, by the Rana of Udaipur, who claims descent from Rama, and is admitted to be the best blood in India. Raghu was great-grandfather of Rama.

The savage dwellers in the woods and caves
Took pity on my grief; they marked my path;
They crossed the mountains and the southern sea;
They found me prisoned in the Ashoka⁷⁸ grove,
And ranged their hosts 'neath thine avenging arm.

Then came the moment of thy victory,
When I was clasped to thy triumphant breast:
Thou dost remember that! But yet thou saidst,
"I know thy heart mine own; I know thine eyes,
That could not look thus bravely into mine,
Had aught of ill befallen; yet, sweet heart,
The wife of Rama must be stainless proved
In sight of gods and men." Then I replied,
"Rama, thou speakest well; dear to a wife
Should be her husband's honour as her own;
Wherefore prepare the fiery ordeal,—
My love and truth shall bear me fearless through."

I went; I thought but of thy love and thee:
The gods took pity on mine innocence,
And rained down blossoms from no earthly trees.
So passed I pure in sight of gods and men.

How sweet, my love, was then our homeward way!
A double brightness glittered on the waves;
A double beauty blossomed in the woods;
The spring leaped up at once to sudden life;
The sun shone fearless, and the wind blew free,
Since thou hadst overthrown the evil one.

⁷⁸ Ashoka : Jonesia Asoca.

The grateful breezes wafted home our car;
O'er sunlit seas we crossed, o'er coral caves,
O'er wave-kissed rocks, and bays with fringe of palm.
We passed wild hills, the haunt of savage tribes;
Bright rivers flashing through embowering woods;
And lakes, the home of reed-frequenting cranes.
We watched the altars smoke from forest glades,
Where holy hermits watered tender shrubs,
And strewed wild rice before their fostered fanes.
We marked our silent hut, and that tall tree
Which spreads its branches set with ruby fruit,⁷⁶
Where Yamuna leaps blue to Ganga's arms.
And last we crossed rich plains and fertile fields:
Far off we marked Ayodhya's gleaming walls,
And, by the dust which rose between, we knew
Thy brother led his host to welcome us,
And render up the throne he kept so well.

Did I unmeekly bear our royal state?
The citizens stand round:—I call on each,
Yea, on my slanderers, to answer me.
Was I not gracious to the lowliest?
Did I not ever seek affliction out,
To comfort where I might? I grudged thee not
To cares of governance and days of toil;
I strove to cheer thee in thine hours of ease,
Sending thee back from leisure well refreshed
To drag once more the heavy yoke of rule.

⁷⁶ Tall tree: the famous fig-tree at Allahabad, where the
Jamuna and Ganges mingle their waters, blue and brown.

But thou,—when under show of humouring
My lightest wish, thou sentest me abroad,
Fell on my ears that knell, “Return no more!”
Had I then disobeyed thy will, or heard
With murmuring? Not one word to speak farewell!
Never to look upon thy children’s face!
Oh! it was cruel, bearing this from thee.
Yet thou didst love me once. Why dost thou turn
Thy face away, and answer not a word?
Is there no hope that time may change my doom?
Rama, thou dost not doubt me in thy heart,
But thou dost fear the people; ’tis for kings
To lead the people, not be led by them:
For kings are set by God before the world,
His chiefest servants of created men,
To govern right by conscience and by laws,
Holding a perfect mirror to the tribes.
Thou wouldst not stoop to sin through fear of death;
Why persecute the guiltless, break thy vows,
Through fear of tarnishing thy mortal fame?
’Twere worthier of a hero and a king
To do the right through shame and through disgrace.

Thou sayest, “Clear thyself before the eyes
Of this assembly; then thrice welcome home.”
Yet what so clear but time may veil with doubt?
And what so pure but slander may assail?

Well, if thou wilt, there is no other way;—
O Earth, my mother, on whose silent breast
I lay a helpless child, when the good king
Found me and fostered me,—hear thou my prayer!

If never I—in thought, or word, or act—
Transgressed my marriage duty and my vows
To my loved husband, take me once again
To thy kind bosom, hushing me to rest
From all the troubles of this weary world.

Then o'er the people passed a murmuring wave,
As when a sudden gust shakes the dry trees
Which pant for rain after a sultry day ;
And Rama cried a loud and bitter cry,
And started from his seat ; but, as he came,
She, with her eyes still fixed upon his face,—
As a tired lily sinks beneath the wave,
Its day's work done,—sank, and was seen no more.

SHARMISHTHA.

FAIR is the city of gold that floats in the fields of heaven,
Ruled by the Danava chiefs, the kings of the Titans of
old :

After the shower of summer is brushed from a smiling even,
Far through the clearness of air is it given those walls
to behold.

City of golden ramparts that blaze in the sun at his setting,
Flashing with banners of crimson and amber changing
to green ;

Silver and diamond turrets of marvellous mystical fretting,
Deep in the lap of the cloud by the lightning momentarily
seen.

Fair are fields of the city, with pleasant murmur of
waters,

Bright with lovelier blossoms than gardens of earth can
bear ;

Fairer the stately forms of the mighty Danava's daughters :
Fairest Sharmishtha, the princess who leads that company
fair.

Was it a childish quarrel, a thrust, a tumult of falling ?

Close in the weeds at their side lay hidden the ruinous
well :

Devayani's name in sudden alarm they are calling—

Hush ! but no reply is heard from the pit where she fell.

Scattered for help they fly toward the distant walls of the
city :

What shall the maiden do, returned again from her
swoon ?

Faint with terror and pain she cries for assistance and pity,
Left in her wild despair to die in misery soon.

Who comes riding here, a king in the port of his glory ?

Raja of Rajas he, Yayati of matchless might :

Bright doth his name shine forth in the annals of India's
story,

Bright as the flag of his car in the stormiest billows of
fight.

King Yayati hears the cry of the frantic maiden ;

Strong is his bow-worn arm to help with tenderest skill :

Swift to the city he guides the car with its sweet freight
laden ;

Safe in her father's arms he leaves her trembling still.

Wroth was Shukra ⁷⁷ the sage : he stood in the palace of
meeting :

Famous in council or war, the chiefs sat each in his
place :

" Art thou distraught, O King, ⁷⁸ that thou choosest a fortune
so fleeting,

Mocking thy teacher thus with an outrage wrought to
his race ?

⁷⁷ Shukra or Ushanas, regent of the planet Venus, and spiritual guide of the Titans ; as Vrihaspati, or Jupiter, is of the gods.

⁷⁸ King Vrishaparvan, King of the Danavas, and father of Sharmishtha.

" I, whose will controls the loveliest planet of morning—
I, who in direst straits have proved to safety your
guide—

How were your homes a prey and your walls to the Suras
a scorning,¹⁹

Should I in anger depart and leave you alone in your
pride ! "

Sore dismay in the breasts of the chiefs his threatening
engendered :

Long with entreaties they strove to abate the force of
his ire :

" Let the source of the wrong as a slave to my daughter
be rendered ;

Only thus may ye hope to avert the curse of her sire."

Who comes riding back, a king in the pomp of his splendour ?

King Yayati comes, a prosperous wooing to speed.

Devayani, his bride, is fair and loving and tender,

Trusting the strong right arm that helped her so well in her
need.

¹⁹ Suras, the demi-gods and constant foes of the Titans. It is curious how often in Indian legends, as in the story of Prometheus, our sympathies are excited rather by the Titans than by their successful rivals. They are always worsted in the end of their conflicts, but seldom in fair fight. Sometimes a direct emanation from the superior gods takes place to save the Suras ; sometimes they obtain the aid of warriors of human race ; sometimes the Titans are defeated through a trick—through their unswerving fixity of purpose, or through being led into heresy and error by a god taking the shape of their teachers.

Answered Shukra the sage, as the homeward march was
beginning—

Elephants, chariots, steeds with royal and bridal state—

“Blest in thy prowess, O son, be thou blest in the wife
thou art winning,

Worthy in soul as in form, with a lord of the earth to mate.

“If she suffice thee not, there are royal maids for thy wooing;
Noblest and fairest, each would joy to stand at thy side:
But, unless blinded by passion thou rush to thine own undoing,
Choose not amongst her slaves to vex the soul of thy bride.”

Swiftly the seasons go by in valour and kingly duty,
Measuring justice to each, and leading to conquest the brave;
Swiftly the years glide away, to love, and splendour and
beauty;

Slowly the months drag on which link the chains of the slave.

Patient and humble, Sharmishtha, her fault with meekness
redeeming,

Daily with duteous hand fulfils the hests of the queen:
Only, when evening reveals her home in its golden seeming,
Silent her tears flow down in the thought of the days that
have been.

Sweet is the season of spring and the smile of the jasmine
bower;

Pleasant the plash of the fountain that drops so cool
from above;

Soothing the songs of the birds, that welcome the mango
flower

Blossoming newly to point the sharpest arrow of love.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ The arrows of Kama are barbed with five flowers. (See the
“Song of the Koil.”)

Noon⁸¹ from the palace gate by the warder is duly chanted ;
 Wearied from judgment the king is gone to the alleys green :
 Who is the maid more fair than the loveliest flower there
 planted,

Tending through sultry heat the trees that are dear to the
 queen ?

Was it strange that the damsel ere long had a royal lover ?⁸²
 Was it strange that her heart by so gallant a wooer was won ?
 Well was their secret kept, nor did Shukra the marriage
 discover

Till to a princely youth was grown Sharmishtha's son.

Out spake Shukra the sage who rules the planet of
 morning,—

Still in his bosom rankled the insult done to his child—
 “ Hast thou dared my curse, nor heeded my words of
 warning,

Reckless in thirst of pleasure, and through thy passion
 beguiled ?

“ Suddenly then thine age shall arrive ere thy prime is
 completed,

Manhood turn to decay, and strength be wasted and dead.”

Devayani the queen in vain her father entreated :

“ Yes ! if the weight of my curse his son will bear in his
 stead.”

⁸¹ Every hour of the day had its allotted occupation for the
 Indian kings, and from the dramas it seems that the changes were
 announced in verse by the warders of the palace.

⁸² It will of course be remembered that the Indian princes
 were not limited to a single queen.

"Hearken, Yadu⁸³ my first-born, my pride, and the heir
of my power,

Art thou willing to bow thy neck to the load of thy sire?"

"Father, the bud of my youth but now is opening to
flower;

How can I thus resign each hope of my life's desire?"

Then the rest of the princes their father's summons
collected;

Hoping relief from the curse, he prayed them one by one;

Loving the pleasures of youth they all his entreaty
rejected,—

All but the youngest, Pūru,⁸⁴ the gentle Sharmishtha's son.

"Father, thy will is my law," so answered he cheerful-
hearted,

"Father, my life is thy gift, and I render thee back thine
own."

Bowed with decay in his youth, he forth from the presence
departed;

Royal in manhood's pride Yayati sat on his throne.

Long he reigned in glory, enjoying each lawful pleasure,
Till he had learnt how the gladness of earth is with
bitterness blent;

Then having vowed with his queens to seek for heavenly
treasure,

Back to his son he rendered the youth so willingly lent.

⁸³ The name of Yadu is still preserved in the powerful tribe of
the Jats.

⁸⁴ Porus, the opponent of Alexander, is supposed to have been
a namesake, if not a descendant of Pūru.

" Meed of thy patience and love, in my seat, O Puru, I
crown thee;
Thee shall thy brethren serve, and rule their realms in
thy name;
High in the roll of the mighty shall prowess and justice
renown thee,
Higher the weakness thou barest ennoble thy household
fame."



AMBA.

["I will not do as Amba, the daughter of Indradawan, king of the city of Kashi, ⁸⁵ did, who left her husband and went to King Bhisham; and, when he would not retain her, returned to her husband; and again, when her husband expelled her, sat down on the bank of the Ganga, and performed a great penance to Mahadev; and, when Bholanath ⁸⁶ came and gave her whatever boon she asked, went, in the strength of that boon, and revenged herself on King Bhisham; this I cannot do."—Eastwick's Translation of the *Prem Sagar*.⁸⁷]

1.

AH me! it is a weary thing

To love, and love the lost;

To see the fairest bud of spring

Nipped by a chilling frost;

And all that once would pleasure bring,

Jar on the soul, like Vina's ⁸⁸ string

By sudden discord crossed:

To feel the soul of gladness die away;

Sad when among the sad,—more sad among the gay.

⁸⁵ Kashi is Benares.

⁸⁶ Bholanath (the lord or husband of Bhola, one of the names of Parvati), and Mahadev (the great god), are titles of Shiva.

⁸⁷ In justice to the lady, it must be stated that the author of the *Prem Sagar* misrepresented her story; indeed, there is scarcely a heroine of Indian mythology who is not represented as a model of wifely virtue. She was taken captive by King Bhishma, who, however, dismissed her honourably when he found that she was a married woman. But her husband refused to receive one who had even been in the power of another; and it was for thus destroying her domestic happiness, that she sought for revenge upon Bhishma.

⁸⁸ Vina is the Hindu lute.

Yet time the deepest wounds can heal,
 And bosoms seared may cease to feel ;
 And Hope her wildest raptures sings
 Amongst the world of shadowy things.
 Then may the heart elastic rise
 Beneath a load of care,
 And dream of one amid the skies,
 Who waits our coming there ;
 Of one who doth a pleasant bower prepare
 Nigh where his own blest spirit lies,
 And to the god of many eyes,⁸⁹
 Who rules those gardens fair,
 Borne on the fragrant breeze above,
 Breathes forth one earnest prayer :
 One drop to fill the cup of bliss,
 One joy there lacketh yet,—and this
 Is union with the soul we love.

2.

A weary thing it is to love,—
 To love, and not be loved again ;
 To feel the heart that fain would rove,
 Enthralled by Passion's iron chain.
 When Hope, that soars on pinion bold,
 Falls from her dizzy venture soon,
 Rewarded with a glance as cold
 As that poor bird which woos the moon.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Indra is the god of the thousand eyes, and lord of paradise.

⁹⁰ The Chakor, bartavelle, or Greek partridge, is supposed to feed on the moonbeams.

But I, in childhood's golden morn
With regal splendour nursed,
Must dwell an outcast and forlorn,
In deepest woe immersed;
And in the mouths of men unborn
Be held a byword and a scorn,
Of all my race accursed.

My wealth, my grandeur, and my name,
My crown, my bridegroom, and my fame,
My earthly happiness, my hopes of heaven,
All, all my treasures I for this return have given.

3.

I sat me down on Ganga's brink,
Beside the sacred stream;
I sat me down, and strove to think,
For all was as a dream;
And that which I had said and done did seem
The fragments of a half-forgotten lay,
Sung by the bards of old on some high festal day.

I looked within, and all my brain did burn;
I looked toward home, and how could I return?
I looked to him, and found no pity there;
A loathing for my love, a scorn for my despair.

Beware, and rue thee of thy bearing high;
Love, watered with a smile, can never die;
But springs there from its scathed and blasted root
A plant of swiftest growth, and Vengeance is its fruit.

4.

Day and night, through many a year,
There I kept my penance drear;
Cold and heat,
And storm and sleet,
Steadfast still I held my seat,
Bark my robe, and herbs my meat;—
Such the vow to Shiva dear.

5.

It was a night
As soft and bright
As the times when I was young;
When, beneath the shade
Which the banian made,
To the Vina's chords I sung;

The sun's last rays
With a crimson blaze
Lit up the skiff's white sail;
And a thousand flowers
From the jasmine bowers
Breathed on the evening gale.

All was moveless and still and calm,
Save the wind as it sighed through the groves of palm,
And the fireflies flickering 'midst the trees,—
One scarce might know them from stars, I ween,
Dancing the blackening waves between,
When the ripples are rising before the breeze.

All was hushed, save the insect's hum,
And the plash of the measured oar,
And the boatman's song, and the distant drum
From the feast on the farther shore.
Then a burning thought
Of the sorrow I wrought
Like lightning crossed my brain;
And my vengeance slept;
And my soul had wept,
And my curse been recalled again;
But I remembered my hate and my vow,
I remembered my scorn and my pain;
My heart, though it break, to my will shall bow;—
So I turned to my penance again.

6.

Soon as the whirlwind of passion passed,
The heaven with clouds was overcast;
Huge and black from the south they came,
And the lightning wrote on them its lines of flame.
With the dim-seen shapes of a spirit band,
And fiendish laughter on either hand,
That drowned the rising storm,
Borne on a bull as the snow-wreath white,⁹¹
Revealed by the flashes of sudden light,
I marked a godlike form:

⁹¹ Shiva, whose abode is on Mount Kailasa, in the Himalayas, is usually represented riding on a white bull, with the crescent on his forehead, and the other emblems in the text.

By the living serpent his waist around,
 By the collar of skulls his neck that bound,
 By his throat with its deep-blue ring,⁹²
 By his glance of terror and majesty,
 By his mooned brow and his triple eye,
 I knew the mountain-king.
 Came there a voice; it seemed not loud,
 Yet deep as the distant thunder-cloud;
 Still was all else, and hushed the storm,
 But I could not gaze on that fearful form,
 So before his feet I bowed.

7.

"Well hast thou striven, worshipper mine,
 Striven 'gainst feelings of mortal birth;
 They who would rise to power divine
 Must crush the weakness that springs from earth.
 Well hast thou served me, worshipper mine;
 Take thou the boon that thy heart desires;
 The Swarga⁹³ king shall his throne resign,
 If to dominion thy soul aspires.
 Seekest thou riches, worshipper mine?
 Seekest thou fortune unharmed by fate?
 Kuvera⁹⁴ shall yield thee his treasures nine,
 And Lakshmi's⁹⁵ self as thy handmaid wait.

⁹² The dark-blue colour of his throat was caused by his swallowing the poison, which threatened to consume the world, at the churning of the ocean. (See the ballad of that name.)

⁹³ Swarga is Paradise; Indra its king.

⁹⁴ Kuvera is the god of wealth, and possessor of the nine famous jewels.

⁹⁵ Lakshmi is the goddess of fortune, and wife of Vishnu.

Seekest thou vengeance, worshipper mine ?

Such is the joy that thy soul would know?
Have then thy will; he is thine, he is thine,
And thy curses shall drag him to ruin and woe !”

8.

He ceased ; and, with a crash the sky that rent,
And through the echoing clouds rolled far away,
As chafing that their wrath so long was pent,
What time a mightier power bade it stay,
Rejoicing now to give their anger vent,
The thunder-spirits joined in fierce affray;
And to and fro the fitful lightning went,
And the rain poured in torrents where I lay
Yet I lay still.

“And mine,” I cried, “is now the power,
And he must bend him to my will:
Say, will he scorn me now, in my triumphal hour?”
And still I lay, until the tempest rude,
Borne on the wings of night, passed slow away;
And the new sun with gold the waters strewed,
And birds came forth to greet the early day:
And still my thoughts on those same themes would
brood,
Nor once did towards the path of mercy stray.—
Then up I rose, ere yet the sun was high,
And to the town I took my weary way:
Few knew me there, I ween, so wan and changed was I.

THE STORY OF THE SYAMANTAK JEWEL.

[The story of the Syamantak jewel is found in all the histories of Krishna, but not placed in its proper order among the incidents of his life. It appears to be a legend much older than the rest, coming down from the time when Krishna was no demi-god, but merely a hero, of marvellous prowess indeed, but one who fell into disgrace and formed erroneous opinions, like ordinary mortals. There are many arguments in favour of the opinion that his divine character is partly founded on some spurious gospel. His name is pronounced Krishta, or Krista; and in many of the events of his life there are resemblances to the sacred narrative, too remarkable for accidental coincidence.]

A simple ballad style seems most suitable to this curious legend of ancient manners. The independence and importance of the ladies introduced is one proof of its antiquity.]

PART I.

LONG did Satrajit serve the Sun;
A boon of price from the god he won:—

“Grant the Syamantak gem, O King;
Honour and wealth will its presence bring.”

“Honour and wealth to the pure 'twill give,
But none save the chaste can hold and live.”

He came with the gem to the Yadavas' hall;
Up rose the princes and warriors all.

“Hearken, O Krishna, thy fame has spread;
The sun-god visits thy roof,” they said.

Forth looked Krishna ; laughing he spake,
" Syamantak's lustre ye here mistake."

Answered the Yadavas, mickle of might,
" Such prize for Satrajit is all unright.

" The jewel is meet for a king to gain ;
Take it, O Krishna, for Ugrasen."⁹⁰

Out laughed Krishna, playing of dice ;—
" Hearest, Satrajit, the chiefs' advice ?"

Up rose Satrajit, silent and vexed ;
He went to his home with his heart perplexed.

Answered Prasena, the hunter rude,—
" Brother, why sittest so gloomy of mood ?"

" Krishna is wroth with our house, I wot ;
He asked me a gift, and I gave it not."

Prasena rose, and the gem he took ;
He went to the wood with an angry look.

Ranging the wood on his snorting steed,
A lion slew them, as fate decreed.

Syamantak he bare to his darksome den ;
It seemed as the sun had entered then ;

The innermost depths were all ablaze ;
The vaults reflected on the rays ;

To the realms below their way they made,
Where Jambavat, king of the bears, was laid.

He rose in wrath from his gloomy lair ;
" Who troubles my rest with this wondrous glare ?"

⁹⁰ Ugrasena was King of the Yadavas, Krishna's tribe.

He searched till he came to the upper ground ;
The lion he smote, whom first he found ;

The gem as a trophy he carried away,
And hung it on high for his child to play.

Long did his comrades seek Prasen ;
They searched for him thrice, but they searched in vain.

Satrajit tossed on his sleepless bed ;
“ What troubles thy rest ? ” his lady said.

“ Peace, good wife, let thy tongue be still ;
Who trusteth a woman, he fareth ill ;

“ No secret stays in a woman’s skin ;
She tells abroad what she hears within.”

Many and ready the tears she shed ;
“ As thou lovest me not, thou shalt see me dead.

“ Am I like others, my word to break ? ”
She wearied her lord, till thus he spake ;—

“ Krishna is wroth with our house, I wot ;
He asked me a gift, and I gave it not.

“ It fears me now he has met Prasen,
Has taken the jewel, and him has slain.

“ But see that my thought to none thou tell ;
God knoweth whether it so befell.”

Little the lady slept that night ;
She sprang from her couch at dawn of light.

“ Hasten, my slaves, our neighbours call ;
Send for my friends and companions all.—

" Krishna is wroth with our house, I wot
He asked us a gift, and we gave it not.

" Now in the wood he has met Prasen,
Has taken the jewel, and him has slain.

" My lord has told me ; be sure 'tis true ;
But tell not the secret I trust to you."

In silence her friends amazed withdrew ;
They talked of the matter by three and by two.

On Krishna's head they cast the blame :
Astonished was he when he heard the same.

" Harken, O chiefs, and Ugrasen ;
I needs must clear me of this foul stain."

With a chosen band he searched around ;
At length the horse's track he found ;

First the horse and stout Prasen ;
Last they came on the lion slain.

Sore afraid were the Yadavas brave ;
None but Krishna would enter the cave.

" Some mighty monster must here abide ;
Rush not on certain death," they cried.

" Witness how died Prasen, we bear :
Clear is thy fame ; why further dare ?"
Answered them Krishna :— " I rest not yet ;
On the missing jewel my heart is set.

" Await my return for days but ten ;
I come as a victor, or come not again."

Into the terrible cave he pressed ;
He groped his path with dauntless breast.

Far off he saw Syamantak's ray ;
Down to the depths he made his way.

The gem above the cradle hung ;
Forward, with eager face, he sprung.

Jambavat roused at the infant's cries ;
They rushed together with kindling eyes.

They grappled as heroes grappled of yore ;
They wrestled for fourteen days and more.—

But, when ten days were gone and past
Home went the Yadavas overcast.

“ What fight could there be, so long unwon ?
The days of Krishna are told and done.”

The rites of the Shraddha ⁹⁷ they duly paid,
Albeit no corpse on the pile was laid.

The food, for his spirit's refreshing meant
New life to the fainting Krishna lent.

Both had been weary and weak with fight ;
Krishna sprang up with redoubled might.

Jambavat craves for quarter now ;—

“ Surely of Rama's race art thou :

“ I warred in Lanka, ⁹⁸ with Rama's men,
'Gainst Ravan, the curst, with his faces ten.

⁹⁷ The Shraddha is the funeral ceremonies.

⁹⁸ Lanka and Ravana : see note 46, on stanza 6 of “ The Fourth Avatara.”

"None since that day has equalled my strength ;
A second Rama I view at length."

He feasted Krishna with royal cheer ;
He plighted the hand of his daughter dear.

Syamantak in dower he likewise gave ;
He sent them safe from the mountain cave.

Glad of heart came Krishna down ;
With Jambavati he reached the town.

He gave Satrajit the jewel free :—

"Take thou thine own, and blame not me."

Home went Satrajit, bowed with shame ;
With anxious mind to his wife he came :—

"Wherewith can we this wrong repair ?"

"Give Satyabhama, our daughter fair."

A lucky time did the Brahman name ;
The family priest to Krishna came.

With rice unground on a dish were put
Forehead-paint, a rupee, and a cocoa-nut.

Where all the guests and Brahmans sat,
Came Krishna, in bridegroom's high-peaked hat.

He circled round with his bride in hand ;
From her slender wrist he loosed the band.

She sat on his left, in her place beside ;
They returned the board, and the knot untied.

In robes of honour the bards they arrayed ;
To the family goddess their vows they paid.

Rice-milk and sugar in sport they ate ;
 All things were done as the Vedas dictate.
 A dowry rich did Satrajit tell ;
 They left him with music and mirth as well.
 Syamantak among his gifts he sent :
 With that was Krishna not content :—

“The jewel thou givest was gained from the Sun,
 But we receive *gifts* from no gods but One.”

PART II.

Kritavarman and Akrur took this ill ;
 They sought Shatadhanwan, the feeble of will.
 “We courted Satrajit’s daughter both,
 And her father to thee did the maid betroth.
 “Are we so base, to be held for nought ?
 Or has Krishna, the cowherd, the kingdom bought ?
 “Now, in his absence, Satrajit kill ;
 Under wrongs like thine can a man be still ?
 “Nor Krishna nor Rama⁹⁹ will soon be near ;
 And, should they be wroth, thy friends are here.”
 Shatadhanwan the witless at night took sword ;
 The jewel he seized, and smote its lord.
 Satyabhama heard, and arose in haste ;
 Her father’s corpse in oil she placed.
 Filled with fury she mounted her car ;
 Day and night she travelled afar.

⁹⁹ Rama is Balarama, brother of Krishna,—not Ramchandra, the patron of Jambavat.

In Hastinapur¹⁰⁰ her lord she found ;
The Kaurava¹⁰¹ princes were seated around.

The eyes of Krishna flashed with flame :

"Cease from thy bitter weeping, dame.

"My wrath is kindled without thy wail ;
Who spoils the nests must the tree assail.

"Hear, Balarama ! dead is Prasen ;
Now is Satrajit foully slain.

"So is Syamantak our common right ;
With me then against Shatadhanwan fight."

Shatadhanwan heard, and was sore afraid ;
He sought Kritavarman, imploring aid.

Laughed Kritavarman, the crafty and cool ;

"The wise man *counsels* ; *acts* the fool.

"Can I with Krishna and Rama contend ?
They who are strongest find *me* their friend."

Shatadhanwan heard, and was sore dismayed ;
He went to Akrura, imploring aid.

His hands he bound with his turban-cloth,—

"Hide me, O sage, from Krishna's wrath."

Answered Akrura, the placid of mind,—

"Why didst thou listen, and look not behind ?

"Life is dear to the wise man's heart ;
Why should *I* die, by taking thy part ?"

¹⁰⁰ Hastinapur is on the Ganges, not far from Delhi.

¹⁰¹ Kauravas : see note 160, to stanza 34 of the "Destruction of the Yadavas."

Shatadhanwan heard, and sadly sighed,—
 “This fatal gem thou at least wilt hide?”
 “So far will I help thee, if sworn thou art
 Not even in death to betray my part.”
 On his swiftest mare Shatadhanwan fled;
 A hundred leagues in a day she sped.
 Krishna harnessed his coursers four;
 He followed with Rama, still gaining more.
 When they were come by Mithila¹⁰² town,
 Faint and dying the mare dropped down.
 “The ground is bad; with the car stay thou;
 On foot,” quoth Krishna, “I follow him now.”
 Two kos¹⁰³ in vain Shatadhanwan fled;
 The disc¹⁰⁴ of Krishna smote his head.
 The body and dress he searched around;
 He returned ashamed; no jewel he found.
 “Brother, our quest is all in vain;
 No jewel I find on the caitiff slain.”
 Wroth was Rama,—“Shame on thy brow;
 I wot no brother of mine art thou.
 “False of tongue, and greedy of gain,
 Go where thou wilt, our paths are twain.”
 Home went Krishna, sad and distraught;
 Satrajit forth from the oil he brought.

¹⁰² Mithila is Tirhut.

¹⁰³ A kos is two miles.

¹⁰⁴ The disc or quoit is Krishna's weapon.

Duly he paid the rites of fire ;
With his own right hand he lighted the pyre.—

Long years in health and plenty passed ;
Balarama returned, appeased at last.

Doubtful in heart was Akrura the sage ;
He went from the city on pilgrimage.

Soon as the jewel was carried out,
Came on the city disease and drought.

Answered the Yadavas, mickle of might,—
“ Whence is this sickness, famine, and blight ?

“ Akrura is born of a holy race ;
His presence it was that preserved the place.

“ We will bring him back by an embassy,
And to hold him scathless our faith will gage.”

Soon as Akrura returned from the east,
Plagues and portents and famine ceased.

Krishna mused at the altered state,—
“ Akrura's virtue was ne'er so great !”

He feasted the chiefs in his palace hall ;
He spake to Akrura before them all,—

“ As do thy virtues, thy riches abound ;
We know that Syamantak *thou* hast found.

“ Keep it, and guard the city from ill ;
But show it, for Rama mistrusts me still.”

Akrura wist not what to reply ;—
“ They will search me and find it, if now I deny.—

"Yes, I have kept it with trouble and care ;
Till the owner shall claim it, safely I bear.

"Little the holder tastes of ease ;
Take it, and give it to whom thou please."

From a box of gold the gem he drew ;
The sun himself they seemed to view.

Eagerly Rama rose, and cried,—

"Remember thy word, and the gem divide."

Out and spake Satyabhama fair,—

"The gem was my father's and I am heir."

Beset was Krishna on either part,
As an ox between the wheels of the cart.

One mode he saw to end the strife,—

"We have no will for a hermit's life.

"Why should we risk the evil fate ?

Wear it, Akrura, and save the state."

He took the gem at the chief's command,
And honour and wealth it brought the land.

RUKMINI.

[Rukmini was betrothed by her brother to Shishupala, though her father wished to give her to Krishna. Rukmini sent tidings of these events to Krishna, who came and carried her off on the marriage-day.]

1.

AND will he come ? far, far away
Stand Vasudeva's¹⁰⁵ princely halls,
And distant far the white waves play
Around the Ocean-city's¹⁰⁶ walls;
And many a wild and trackless wood,
Where nought but monstrous shapes is seen,
And rock and desert many a rood,
And hostile cities, lie between.

2.

The sceptred kings of Bharat's¹⁰⁷ land
Pay homage to the lord of earth :
Why should he deign to seek the hand
Of one whose kinsmen mock his birth ?

¹⁰⁵ Vasudeva was father of Krishna.

¹⁰⁶ The Ocean-city is Dwaraka, on the coast of Kattiawar, in Gujrat, fabled to have been built on the ocean. (See "Destruction of the Yadavas," stanza 5.)

¹⁰⁷ Bharata was the first sovereign who enjoyed universal empire, whence India is known as Bharatavarsha, the region of Bharata.

The proudest chiefs of Manu¹⁰⁸ born
 Invite the lord of Yadu's¹⁰⁹ name;
 But he must meet with hate and scorn,
 If here his promised bride he claim.

3.

Of all the royal maids of earth,
 Whose fathers rule from sea to sea,—
 My peers in beauty and in birth,—
 Why should he fix his thoughts on me?
 But he the sons of men excels;
 My heart he made his captive soon
 The moon sees many Bartavelles,
 The Bartavelle¹¹⁰ no second moon.

4.

I waited at the lattice high;
 I listened for his courser's feet;
 And joyful faces passed me by,—
 Glad voices echoed through the street.
 The sound of mirth and revelry
 Came forth into the moonlit night,
 And lordly strains of minstrelsy
 That tell of some old famous fight.

¹⁰⁸ Manu was the Hindu Noah.

¹⁰⁹ Yadu was the ancestor of the tribe to which Krishna belonged.

¹¹⁰ The Bartavelle, or Greek partridge, is supposed to feed on the moonbeams. The Indian simile, "The moon sees many night-flowers—the night-flower sees but one moon," is well known, having been published by Sir Wm. Jones, and imitated by Moore.

5.

With voice of music and of song,
O'er silken carpets, down the street,
The gay procession moved along,
The bridegroom's haughty train to meet.
The banners floated from the towers,
The city shone in all her pride;
The stately gates were wreathed with flowers,
And all were glad—except the bride.

6.

But see ! the morn, the marriage morn,
Is lightening in the eastern sky ;
Oh, that I were the meanest born
In the gay throng that hurry by !
If Krishna come, for him I fear,
Unaided in the unequal strife ;
Yet, if no help from him be near,
A dreary lot is mine through life.

THE DESTRUCTION OF YADAVAS.

PART I.

The Glory of Dwaraka.

1.

SADLY sigh thy waves, O Sea,
Along the barren sand,
Telling a mournful history
To the lone and wasted land ;
A history that endeth not
Of sin, and shame, and woe ;
Such is man's never-failing lot
In this blind world below,
Absence and sorrow, pain and death,
Are fated from our birth ;
Such portion each inheriteth
Who breathes the air of earth.

2.

Yet it seems me now they sing
Than their wont a sadder song ;
Sadder embassage they bring,
In a music deep and strong,—
Each pursuing wave along
Chanted from the coralled ring
Of the city of their king,—
Each one, as it hurries by,
To the rock-clefts whispering.

Then, o'er all the pools that lie
Mirroring the clouds and sky,
Sheltered in their rocky bed
By the towering cliffs o'erhead,
Slow and solemn murmurs spread,
As amid the grass that waves
Over long-neglected graves,
In some city of the dead
(Where they slumber, kings and slaves,
Side by side, unreckoned,)
Or the mounds that crest the plain,
Piled above the foully slain.

3.

Even thus, in days of yore,
Sighed they to the foamy shore,
All the billows, trouble tost,
With a sobbing motion,
Mourning o'er the treasures lost ¹¹¹
Of the rifled ocean.

Now no mountain's circling sweep
Gods and demons league to ply ;
Now the secrets of the deep,
As of old, untroubled lie ;

¹¹¹ Fourteen jewels were gained from the ocean, when churned by the gods and demons. Mount Mandara was the churning stick, and the serpent Vasuki was the rope ; but the latter, wearied with the labour too long continued, emitted a poison which nearly consumed the world. There are other versions of the legend. (See the "Churning of the Ocean.")

Now on pearl-adorned beds
 Ocean's powers may careless sleep ;
 From the toiling serpent's heads
 Now no flaming poison spreads.
 Wherefore then so mournfully
 Roll thy long blue waves, O Sea?

4.

'Tis a heavier loss they weep,
 All the spirits of the deep ;
 Weep the City of the West,¹¹²
 Land of love, and land of rest,
 'Mid the holy holiest:
 Her glory for one brief hour to see,
 One moment within her walls to be,
 Was to dwell for ever blest.
 More precious far such boon would be
 Than all the gift bestowed by thee,
 O Kalpa¹¹³ tree,
 Granter of every wish,—or thine,
 O Surabhi,¹¹⁴ of race divine
 Mother of kine.

5.

At Krishna's word, she was reared in a night
 By the builder of Swarga's towers,¹¹⁵

¹¹² The city is Dwaraka, situated on the coast of the peninsula of Gujrat.

¹¹³ The Kalpa is one of the five trees of Swarga. (See "Hymn to Indra.")

¹¹⁴ Surabhi is the cow of plenty.

¹¹⁵ Vishvakarman was the architect of the g

The sons of Yadu¹¹⁶ to shield in flight
From the threats of the demon powers.

They laid them down

In the leaguered town,

In fear of the barbarous host ;

But they roused them from sleep

'Mid the murmurs deep

Of the waves on their refuge-coast.

She sat as a queen

On the waters green,

Where the ocean humbly bore her ;

And day and night

Sudarshan's¹¹⁷ might

Kept watch and ward before her.

Well watered lay her fertile land,

Stretched far around ;

Beyond, her guardian hills did stand

With forests crowned.

Yet the town wore

A glory more

A thousand-fold,—

Her jewelled halls,

Whose lofty walls

Were wrought with gold:

Where the sun shone

Her towers upon,

What eye might gaze ?

¹¹⁶ The Yadavas were transported from Mathura, when besieged by Jarasantha.

¹¹⁷ Sudarshana is the animated discus of Vishnu.

In joy and mirth
 Too bright for earth
 Passed all her days.
 Her royal state
 May none relate ;
 So fair a spot
 The eye of heaven
 Through the regions seven¹¹⁸
 Beholdeth not.

6.

The aged monarch still
 A righteous sceptre swayed ;¹¹⁹
 The tribes his every will
 Right cheerfully obeyed.
 The chief in rank and age
 Spoke words of counsel sage ;
 Ready with shield and brand
 Did countless warriors stand.
 All her priests were pure of life ;
 All her people void of strife ;
 Day by day their joy increased ;
 House to house was nightly feast ;
 Rich the wares in mart and road ;
 Fair the gifts on bards bestowed ;
 Still did vessels chased in gold
 Five mysterious branches hold ;¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ The seven regions : see note to the "Moral of History."

¹¹⁹ Ugrasena was the king of the Yadavas.

¹²⁰ The five trees, branches of which are placed in waterpots on festivals, are the Indian, the holy, and the wave-fig-trees, the mango, and a kind of acacia.

Fresher garlands still were hung;
 Newer praises still were sung;
 Seer and sage salvation's road
 From the mystic precepts showed;
 Daily were the Vedas read;
 For the poor the board was spread;
 Never was a rite neglected;
 Never was a face dejected;
 Where the feet of Krishna rest,
 Who could dwell, and be unblest?

PART II.

The Songs of the Bards.

7.

EVERMORE the tales were told,
 Wonders of the times of old,—
 Vishnu's gracious works of yore,
 When he sought the earth before;
 Yet Krishna's praises from their tongue
 Still flowed the readiest,—
 And, when of Krishna's deeds they sung,
 The crowd more eager prest.
 They sang the song of his wondrous birth;¹²¹
 How the rod of the tyrant crushed the earth;
 How her cry went up to the lotus-throne,¹²²
 And the ears of the merciful heard her groan;

¹²¹ Krishna was born to slay the tyrant Kansa, who usurped the throne of his (Kansa's) father, Ugrasena.

¹²² Krishna was an incarnation of Vishnu, who is usually represented seated on a lotus.

How he left the dwelling of life and light
No sage may reach in thought;
How an infant bore the preserver's might,
And mortal became the Infinite;
So love and mercy wrought.

8.

They sang the song¹²³ of his childhood bright;
How he was born in the silent night;
How a mighty sleep on the warders fell,
And burst were the bars of the dungeon cell;
Rolled the thunder, and swelled the gale,
Lest the foemen should hear his first feeble wail;
Yamuna¹²⁴ curbed her foaming tide,
And gently kissed the shore,
That the father might pass from side to side,
With the precious freight he bore.
For, though he was born in princely state,
He left the abodes of the earthly great;
Through the forest-wilds he loved to roam,
And with simple herdsmen he made his home,
Pursued by the demons' hate.
And, when the appointed days were past,
And mercy ceased to plead,—
When the stroke of justice fell at last,
And the suffering poor were freed,—

¹²³ It had been foretold to Kansa that he should be slain by the eighth son of Vasudeva and Devaki. Great precautions were therefore taken to slay the infant at the moment of birth; but, in spite of all, Vasudeva was enabled to convey the child to Nanda, chief of the herdsmen of Vraja, who brought him up.

Yamuna is by the English written and pronounced Jumna.

He took not the crown which his arm had won,
 But honoured his father's will,
 That never of Yadu's¹²⁵ seed a son
 Should spring the throne to fill.

9.

They sang how to sea-borne Dwaraka he bore his brides
 away,
 From the ranks of the rival suitors, and the kings in
 their fierce array;
 They sang of the love of Rukmini,¹²⁶ and the deeds of
 her marriage-day,
 And of the wild and wondrous cave where Jambavati lay;
 How in her virgin grace he won
 Her, the daughter of the sun,
 Dwelling in her magic home
 Beneath the silver wave,
 Till, a weary world to save,
 The promised bridegroom come.

10.

Where the deep blue waters glide¹²⁷
 By the lonely river-side,
 With a stately step she trod,
 Like the daughter of a god:

¹²⁵ Yadu was the eldest son of Yayati, but, with his brethren, was disinherited, and the crown conferred on the youngest, Puru, who had taken on him his father's decay, in exchange for his own youth. (See "Sharmishtha.")

¹²⁶ Rukmini (see note on "Rukmini"), Jambavati (see "The Syamantak Jewel"), and Kalindi, were three of Krishna's eight queens.

¹²⁷ The waters of the Yamuna are blue and clear.

Bright her brow as the autumn moon,—¹²⁸
 Black her locks as the clouds of June,—
 Round her neck as the ring-dove's throat,—
 Sweet her voice as the koil's¹²⁹ note,—
 Slender her waist as the lion's mate,—
 Stately her pace as the elephant's gait,—
 Dark her hair as the long black snake,—
 Lovely her hands as the pride of the lake,—
 Graceful her arm as the creeper's shoot,—
 Ruddy her lips as the vimba's¹³⁰ fruit,—
 Golden her face as the champaka's¹³¹ hue,—
 Blushing her cheeks as the rosebud new,—¹³²
 Smooth her limbs as the plantain's stem,—
 Piercing her eyes as the polished gem,—
 White her teeth as the jasmine's smile,—¹³³
 Strong in her beauty a saint to beguile.

¹²⁸ Some of these similes are not very consonant with European ideas, as the comparison of the tapering back-hair to a snake, and the slow, languid step to an elephant's motion; but the latter especially is too universal a point of description, and too characteristic of Indian notions of elegance, to be omitted.

¹²⁹ The koil is the Indian cuckoo, named from its note.

¹³⁰ The vimba is a small red gourd: the *Momordica monadelpha*.

¹³¹ The champaka is a deliciously fragrant flower of the magnolia family, *Michelia Champac*.

¹³² The rose is Persian, and would not be found in classical poetry, but it occurs in the corresponding passage of the *Premasagar*.

¹³³ The colour of a smile is white in Indian poetry.

11.

For her sweeter breath the bees
Left the blossoms of the trees,
Fairer though they bloomed awhile
In the sunshine of her smile.
Every rival shrub a wreath
 Flung upon her lovely head ;
At her touch, its leaves beneath
 Flashed the Ashoka's¹³⁴ glowing red.
Often with her lute she wandered,
 Striking in so wild a key,
As with spirit rapt she pondered
 On her wondrous destiny,
That the timid forest-deer,¹³⁵
 All with eyes undaunted
(Eyes so large, yet not a peer
Unto hers they stayed to hear),
 Stood with limbs implanted,
Panting, panting, ever near,
Gazing, gazing, without fear,
 By that strain enchanted.
Then the trees, whose waving tresses
Wantoned to the wind's caresses,
Cast the promise of their fruit
As a tribute to her lute,
While the koil's chorus rang,
Answering music as she sang.

¹³⁴ The Ashoka (Jonesia Asoca) flowers when touched by a lady's foot. It has a beautiful scarlet blossom; but the leaves are at the end of the branches.

¹³⁵ The deer are always said to be captivated by music.

12.

The Song of Kalindi.

"How long, O father mine,¹³⁶
Must I all lonely pine,
And waste my brightest years in solitude,
And watch the seasons range
In slow unvarying change,
Traced by their silent steps along the leafy wood
I weary of the language of the birds:
They, mate with mate, and kind with kind, rejoice;
I weary of my own unanswered voice;
I weary of the echo whence my words
In mocking sympathy repeated came;
I weary most to see thee ever shine,
Day after day, unchangeably the same:
How long dwell I alone, how long, O father mine?

13.

"Oh, but for one brief hour, that I might hear
The speech of man, though strange the words and
cold,—
And, oh, that that bright morn were dawning near,
When I shall smiles of love again behold,
And listen to that voice to fancy dear,—
Dear to my fancy, though as yet unknown
To this dull earthly sense, whose gentlest tone
Strikes chords within my breast which it can wake alone!

¹³⁶ Kalindi is the daughter of the Sun.

14.

" O Krishna, my beloved, would that I
Were worthier of thee ! I, from eldest time,
By fate predestined to such rank sublime !
And do I murmur at the months' delay,
And that my lot in nerveless rest should fall ?
Though years in penance dread went lingering by,
And nights of watching closed the fasting day,
One hour of happiness were worth it all,—
One smile of thine would lives of pain repay.

15.

" Each hath his work to do, whate'er our lot,
Whate'er our calling here ; and thou, my sire,
Thou readest me a lesson unforgot ;
Thou castest not a glance of fond desire
Where towering Meru¹³⁷ rises, streaked with gold,
And all the gods their courts of pleasaunce hold,—
Nor toward the luscious gardens of the south,
Where all day long the softest breezes stray,—
Nor speedest, ere the destined close of day,
To quench in ocean's streams thy coursers' drouth ;
But steadfast in thy march thou hold'st thine ordered way.

16.

" Each hath his work to do, the small, the great ;
Not for themselves do monarchs wear the crown,
Yoked to the heavy burthen of the State ;¹³⁸
Not for himself doth Krishna linger down

¹³⁷ Meru, where stand the palaces of the gods, is the North Pole.

¹³⁸ The king is often described under the emblem of a bull.

Far from his golden halls of perfect rest:
 And, would his servants do their lord's behest,
 Who cheerful work their work are those who serve him best.

17.

"And I must ponder and meditate
 The stains of the earth to expiate,
 Till my heart shall be weaned from worldly things,
 And my spirit resume her native wings,
 And be meet for her glorious fate.
 Silent the days shall flee,
 Till thou shalt welcome me
 With thine own voice;
 Then from all sorrow free,
 Shall I, beloved, with thee
 Ever rejoice."

So sang she, watching by her sister river,¹³⁹
 Morning and night,
 Till Krishna came his servants to deliver,
 The world's delight.

PART III.

The Omens.

18.

BUT the gods with envy eyed
 The ocean-city's towers :
 Sadly, as a mourning bride
 (Who sees her warrior husband ride
 To face the invading powers,

¹³⁹ The Yamuna, or Jumna, is also daughter of the Sun; indeed Kalindi is probably the river personified.

With all his clan in mailed pride,)
 Lays her robes of joy aside,¹⁴⁰
 So Vaikuntha's¹⁴¹ bowers
 On the wind that softly sighed,
 Mazed amid their branches wide,
 Cast their half-blown flowers ;
 Dew-drops dripped from all their leaves,
 Like the tears of her who grieves
 For a dear and absent one ;
 To their master's wave-rocked throne
 Far the heavy-laden air
 Bore the perfume of their prayer :
 And the birds their boughs among
 Ever answered song to song,—
 "In vain for us the richest blossoms glow ;
 In vain for us the coolest breezes blow ;
 In vain for us the freshest fountains flow ;
 All is to us a dreary night,—
 We lack the sun of our delight ;
 Krishna, thou lingerest long!"

19.

Well did he for whom they sighed
 Know the fate-appointed tide ;
 His task he now had wholly done,
 Had slain the haughty chiefs each one,

¹⁴⁰ The wife wears no ornaments while her husband is absent.

¹⁴¹ Vaikuntha is the heaven of Vishnu, as Swarga is of Indra.

Who ruled with tyrant sway,
And hurled that bold impostor down,¹⁴²
Who dared in Shiva's holiest town
To lead the world astray.
Fate the last and darkest page
May no more delay to show ;
Seen afar by saint and sage,
Black with guilt and woe,
Looms upon the earth below
The fatal Kali age.¹⁴³

20.

Therefore did a deepening gloom
Shadow forth the city's doom ;
Therefore through her dwellings ceased
Mirth and music, song and feast ;
Shrieks of woe were heard at night ;
Demon shapes of lurid light,
Fiendish triumph in their eyes,
Glared from out the threatening skies,
Darkening o'er the sinking sun,
Ere the night were yet begun.
Beasts with human voice foretold
Woes and sorrows manifold ;

¹⁴² The impostor was Paundraka, who in Kashi, or Benares, asserted himself to be an incarnation of Vishnu. This points apparently to a schism among the Vaishnavas, the weaker party in which was supported by the followers of Shiva.

¹⁴³ The Kali, or iron age, dates from the death of Krishna.

Laughter filled her homes no more ;
Wailing rose from every door ;
From the frequent funeral pyres
Seemed the city girt with fires,—
Camp-fires of beleaguering hosts,
Death their king, their warriors ghosts.

21.

Through the drear dark hours of night,
Veiled in vapours chill and white,
Borne along the shrieking blast,
Troops of ghastly spectres passed.
Silent now the busy feet
From the ruin-stricken street ;
Each man shunned his neighbour's face,
Fearing in his eyes to trace
Some new portent direr still,
Presaging a greater ill ;
Or, with whispers thronging round,
Some a dreadful pleasure found,
Shuddering while they strained to hear
Each the other's tale of fear.
But the horror chief of all
Never from their lips did fall ;
By the day and by the night
Still he haunted each man's sight ;
None might from his presence 'scape ;
None might tell his shapeless shape ;
But they closer drew their breath,
For they felt that he was Death.

22.

In Murari's¹⁴⁴ palace then
 Gathered Yadu's noblest men ;
 Him within the cool retreat,
 Sheltered from the noontide heat,
 To his sons and grandsons round
 Teaching wisdom's truths, they found.
 When the suppliants met their view,
 Knowing well the honour due
 To the aged and the good,
 Reverent all the warriors stood.
 But, in silence pacing slow,
 Garbed in all the guise of woe,
 Passing by the proffered seat,
 Till he bowed at Krishna's feet,—
 Bowed his head and joined his hand,—
 Spake the eldest of the band :

23.

" Dost not thou, O Krishna, see
 All thy people's misery?
 Heed'st thou not thy parents' pain,
 And the cares of Ugrasen ?
 Have thine arrows lost their might ?
 Is Sudarshan shorn of light ?
 Is our land a loathed spot ?
 Are thy mercies all forgot ?

¹⁴⁴ Murari means the enemy of Mura, who was a demon slain by Krishna.

No! the city of the wave
 Thou didst raise, and thou shalt save;
 Thou didst frame her for thine own,
 Firm upon her ocean-throne;
 Safe she dwelt, secure from harm,
 Man or fiend, with steel or charm;
 Quenched was Kritya's¹⁴⁵ flaming sword;
 Foiled her magic arts abhorred;
 Scattered Salav's¹⁴⁶ countless host;
 Humbled Dwivid's¹⁴⁷ impious boast;
 Shishupala's brethren bold
 In one rapid ruin rolled.—
 Now behold a fiercer foe;
 Now a greater grief we know:
 Seek we our defence in vain?
 Loose thy conquering shafts again!
 Haste, arise, thy people free!
 Hear us, son of Devaki!"

24.

He ceased his prayer, and all the train
 Took up the closing words again;
 But the foe of Madhu¹⁴⁸ sighed,
 As sadly he replied,

¹⁴⁵ Kritya was a female fiend, produced from the sacrificial fire by the incantations of the son of the King of Kashi, to revenge the death of his father, who fell with his friend, King Paundraka. (See stanza 10.)

¹⁴⁶ Salava and the brothers of King Shishupala, Vakradanta, and Viduratha, made various attacks upon Dwaraka, to revenge the death of Shisupala.

¹⁴⁷ Dwivida was minister of Salava.

¹⁴⁸ Madhu was a demon slain by Vishnu.

For he knew that their hopes were vain :

“Because the children of Yadu dwelt

Securely long, and no danger felt,

Now are these trials in mercy meant,

To win them again to the way they went

In the troublous times of old ;

For now are their hearts with illusion blind,

And darkness and passion have ruled each mind,

And the veil of the world hath dimmed their eyes,

And they seek not to pass beyond the skies

To the radiance these mists enfold :

For the blessings they seek are as curses sent,

And love is revealed in a chastisement,

And the favoured of heaven rest not secure,

But those who through suffering keep them pure

The secrets of truth behold.

Now are Dwaraka's destined days fulfilled,

And the power that portions our lot hath willed

We should wander away from our pleasant home,

On the shores of the barren sea to roam

By the guidance of fate controlled.

25.

“To Arjun,¹⁴⁹ Indra's warrior son,

Midmost of the royal five,

Let each entrust his child, his wife ;

He shall guard them forth each one,

That so our names may yet survive,

Fresh springing into newer life.

¹⁴⁹ Arjun was third of the five Pandava princes.

But, ye who are men, in your war array
Attend at the northern gate :
When the sky blushes red for the seventh day,
We march to seek our fate."

PART IV.

The Abandonment of the City.

26.

There, before the city wall,
Met the Yadav warriors all.
What though in him they could but trace
The conquering hero of their race ;
Though, blinded by pleasure, to them was sealed
The truth which that veil of flesh concealed,
Yet they followed Krishna still ;
He might lead them at his will :
In his jewelled chariot riding,
Forth he moved, their forces guiding.

27.

Still a countless host was theirs,
As the stars or as the sand ;
But heavy was each heart with cares :
Musing what doom awaits the band,
What new destruction fate prepares,
In silence strode they on.

For thought had clouded Krishna's brow ;
 A weary weight was Rama's ¹⁵⁰ plough ;
 And fled the light of triumph now,

On every face that shone

When erst they marched in gallant show
 To cope with many a haughty foe,
 False Paundrak's ¹⁵¹ pride to overthrow,

And tame fierce Rukmin's ¹⁵² might,—
 When Rama's club and Krishna's bow
 Laid Bana's ¹⁵³ demon-armies low,
 And Shiva's self was forced to know
 A victor in the fight.

28.

As Indra's forces move to war,
 So showed their squadrons then,
 When from his kingdom in the north,
 Beyond all mortal ken,
 High-seated on his cloud-built car,
 He leads his legions forth
 With rainy shafts arrayed,
 And seeks the scorching plains in aid
 To trees and beasts and men.

¹⁵⁰ Balarama was elder brother of Krishna ; his weapons were a pestle and ploughshare.

¹⁵¹ Paundrak : see stanza 19.

¹⁵² Rukmin, brother of Rukmini, led an army to rescue her, when Krishna carried her off. (See "Rukmini.")

¹⁵³ Bana : see stanza 38.

For with the rainbow's various hue
Their banners were displayed ;
Like lightning flashed the rays to view
From helmet, shield, and blade ;
Like distant thunder rolled the beat
Of battle-drums, and tramp of feet
From those unnumbered crowds ;
And, dusky-vast as thunder clouds,
The elephants went by ;
Their tusks seemed flights of large-winged cranes
Which, joying in the coming rains,
Soaring from Anga's ¹⁵⁴ rice-sown plains,
Go screaming through the sky.
Came the daughters of the gods ;
Came the choosers of the slain ; ¹⁵⁵
Floating from their blest abodes
Down the bright empyreal roads,
They sought the battle plain ;
Well they knew how Yadu's sword
Gives to each a warrior lord.

29.

But now no music stirring
From drum or cymbal breaks ;
No shaft from bow unerring
The startled stag o'ertakes ;

¹⁵⁴ Anga is the country about Bhagalpur.

¹⁵⁵ The Apsarasas, or nymphs of Paradise, are wedded to warriors slain in battle. The expression does not mean choosers of those marked for slaughter, as in the Northern mythology, but choosers for themselves of the bravest warriors among those fallen in battle.

No squadrons lightly wheeling
 Contend in mimic fray ;
 To prowess past appealing,
 No minstrel tunes his lay.
 On they journeyed by the ocean,
 Dark and silent as the main,
 Which with long and heavy motion
 Showed the coming hurricane.

 PART V.

The Massacre.

30.

TALL and strong the rushes grow
 Where Prabhasa's ¹⁵⁶ fountains flow ;
 There the groves are thick and green,
 And the waters glide between ;
 Gentle breezes all the day,
 Seaward rising, drive the spray ;
 Branches bend with fruitage sweet ;
 Blossoms spring beneath the feet ;
 Birds of song or plumage bright
 Eye and ear at once delight ;
 Seemed the vale from Swarga riven,
 And to earth a foretaste given. ¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Prabhasa is a place of pilgrimage near Somnath, on the coast of Gujrat.

¹⁵⁷ The Meghaduta has, in a somewhat different reasoning,—

“ The fairest portion of celestial birth,
 Of Indra's paradise transferred to earth,
 The last reward to acts of virtue given,
 The only recompense then left to heaven.”

31.

Footsore from the burning sand,
Rested there the weary band ;
There the strife-enkindling draught,
Led by destiny, they quaffed,
Heedless of command.
Slight the spark that roused the fire ;
Signs and taunts and words of ire
Soon the tumult fanned ;
Towards the water's brink they pressed ;
From their bed the reeds they wrest,
Grasped with nervous hand.

32.

Alas ! the mace,¹⁵⁸ the fatal mace,
Bane foretold of Yadu's race !
As small as dust 'twas ground,
Yet the fragments parted not ;
Strewn on the waters round,
They reached the destined spot.
Sprung from that iron seed,
Iron became each reed ;
Yet none whose comrades bleed
From the fight ceased :
Wildly with frenzied eyes
Shout they their battle-cries ;
Swift through the camp there flies
Madness increased :

¹⁵⁸ Mace : see stanza 35.

Fiercer descend the blows ;
 Wilder the slaughter grows ;
 All in the contest close,
 Noblest and least.

33.

How may I tell
 What warriors fell
 On that ill-omened day ?
 For not a chief of Yadu's name,
 And not a clansman less in fame,
 But joined the fatal fray.
 There Prithu fell, and Bhadrasen,
 And Charu's heart-blood dyed the plain,
 And mighty Durgama was slain,
 And Shruta lifeless lay.¹⁸⁹

34.

There perished Jambavati's son,
 Whom the Kurus¹⁹⁰ seized and bound,
 When he Duryodhan's daughter won
 From the suitors thronged around,
 Till Rama came to his nephew's aid,
 Alone in the might of his wondrous blade

¹⁸⁹ Bhadrasena and Durgama were sons of Vasudeva. Charu and Shruta were sons of Krishna. Prithu was a Yadava.

¹⁹⁰ The hundred Kuru princes ruled in Hastinapura, (or the elephant city,) on the Ganges not far from Delhi. Duryodhana was the eldest of them, and his daughter was carried off by Samba, while making her public choice of a husband; the Kurus pursued and captured him.

(The tamer of Yamuna's waters blue);—¹⁶¹
 Then their tyrannous force was stayed :
 For the elephant-city his prowess knew,
 When her tottering walls to the stream he drew,
 And the princes hastened for peace to sue,
 And freed the youth and maid.

35.

Samba his name, and from his side
 The accursed club was born;¹⁶²
 For so the sages he defied
 Had in their anger sworn
 Of him, by whom of bashful bride
 (In foolish thought his state to hide)
 The soft attire was worn ;
 In recklessness of youthful pride
 With mocking tale their power he tried,
 And age and wisdom dared deride,
 And turn to jest and scorn.

36.

There Kritavarman sank in fight,
 Of counsel dark and deep ;

¹⁶¹ A bend in the river Yamuna is said to have been caused by Balarama, who drew her to him with his ploughshare, when she refused to change her course to bathe him.

¹⁶² Samba was dressed by his companions as a woman, and brought to the sage as a bride inquiring about her future offspring; the sages, incensed, replied, "A club, which shall destroy the race of Yadu."

Who aided Drona's¹⁶³ son to smite
 The Pandav camp at silent night,
 And did with subtle art incite
 Satrajit's death in sleep ;
 But soon a heavy reckoning paid
 The murderer, for the tears he made
 Fair Satyabhama¹⁶⁴ weep.

37.

There princely Aniruddha died
 Beneath the ruthless mace,
 Who in a vision viewed his bride
 Of Bana's royal race ;¹⁶⁵
 When fairy wings did gently glide,
 And with the slumberer softly hied
 Where blushing she, and bashful-eyed,
 Awaited his embrace,

¹⁶³ Drona was father of Ashwathaman, preceptor of the Kuru princes, and their helper in the war with the Pandavas. (See stanza 47.)

¹⁶⁴ Satyabhama, wife of Krishna, and daughter of Satrajit, had been wooed by Akrura, Kritavarman, and Shatadhanwan, and the two former persuaded the latter to revenge his slight by the murder of Satrajit ; Krishna revenged his death. (See the "Story of the Syamantak Jewel.")

¹⁶⁵ Bana, King of the Daityas or Titans, propitiated Shiva, and gained a thousand arms ; but, finding no employment for them, he again requested an antagonist. Shiva gave him a flag, on the fall of which he would meet with an enemy, viz., Krishna, who came to rescue his grandson, Aniruddha, son of Pradyumna, from confinement, as Bana had thrown him into chains on the discovery of his secret marriage with his daughter Usha.

Though bars of brass the castle bound,
And demon-warders watched around;
No tower of strength was ever found,
But Love should win his place.

38.

And, when the peacock-flag, that lay,
Its pride with dust bestained,
To him the intruder did betray
Who o'er the Daityas reigned,
And, torn from her embrace, he lay
With serpent fetters chained,
True-hearted to each other they
In threats and scorn remained;
Till friendly armies did convey
The pair along their homeward way,
With bridal pomp and music gay
And triumph unrestrained;
Though Bana braced, their march to stay,
The thousand arms he gained,
And all the fiends that owned his sway
The contest fierce maintained,
And all who Shiva's rule obey,
And Shiva's self in dread array.
To aid his votary deigned.

39.

And there too shared the common fate
Akrura, leader wise and great,
Of dauntless hardihood,

Who in the counsels of the State
 In chiefest reverence stood ;
 Who Surya's gift¹⁶⁶ in days of yore,
 The wealth-bestowing jewel, wore,
 So virtue-rich there could
 No evil linger on the shore,
 But peace and health and golden store,
 And fortune flowing more and more
 To universal good.

40.

There lay Pradyumna¹⁶⁷ stark and cold,
 And dimmed that gleaming sword
 Which back the tide of battle rolled
 When Yadu's heroes warred ;
 He in whose form of angel mould
 Did Rati, queen of love, behold
 Her long-lamented lord
 (In beauty pure, as when he died
 By Shiva's glance of anger eyed,)
 To life and her restored.

41.

But Krishna strove their rage to quell,
 Though all his words were vain,
 Until his loved Pradyumna fell ;—
 Then all the father's wrath did swell

¹⁶⁶ On the death of Satrajit (see stanza 36), Akrura got possession of the jewel he had obtained from the Sun. (See the "Story of the Syamantak Jewel.")

¹⁶⁷ Pradyumna, son of Krishna and Rukmini, was an incarnation of Kama, god of love, after he was reduced to ashes by Shiva. (See the "Song of the Koil.")

Within his maddened brain ;
At once he hurled his discus fell,
And heaped the earth with slain.
Of all the tribe that self-same morn
Saw forth so stately wend,
(Now strewn, as lies the mellow corn
When the reaper's labours end,
Brother on brother, friend on friend, —
Slain by the hand that once had borne
All dangers to defend,)
There was none living, far or near,
Save Krishna and his charioteer.

42.

Then to their lord returned no more
The ensigns of his might;
Swift, swift, along the level shore
The steeds the car celestial bore,
Till ocean's waves with sullen roar
Had swept them from the sight.
The mace, the disc, yet red with gore,
Well knew their earthly labours o'er,
And, herald-like, their king before
They winged their heavenward flight.

PART VI.*The Triumph.*

43.

But Balarama sat apart,
Beneath a mango's shade,

Still brooding in his moody heart
 O'er kindred strife that made
 The Kurus' field a slaughter-place
 For chiefs their ancient line who trace¹⁶⁸
 From Surya glory-rayed,
 And Soma, god of milder face,—
 And mighty kings of alien race
 Who marched their troops to aid.

44.

When on a sudden there befell
 A portent dread and strange to tell,
 While Daruk¹⁶⁹ viewed amazed;
 For forth from Rama's¹⁷⁰ mouth there came
 A serpent vast, with eyes of flame,
 And, more and more as swelled his frame,
 A thousand crests he raised.
 As toward the sea his course he drew,
 The Nagas¹⁷¹ thronged around to view,
 And snakes of every size and hue
 Upon their monarch gazed;
 The tide advanced his steps to greet,
 And water-nymphs with twinkling feet,
 And ocean-gods brought offerings meet,
 And Ocean, welcoming his retreat,
 With fiery radiance blazed.

¹⁶⁸ The royal families of India all belonged to the solar or lunar race. All were engaged in the great war between the Kurus and their cousins, the five Pandava princes.

¹⁶⁹ Daruka was Krishna's charioteer.

¹⁷⁰ Balarama was an incarnation of Shesha, king of serpents.

¹⁷¹ The Nagas are the snake-gods who dwell in Patala, or the subterranean regions.

45.

"Lo, Shesha ! lo, the serpent king !"

The wondering Daruk cried,

"Who girds the world with monstrous ring,—

Who o'er the milky tide

Supports, with crests high towering,

Vaikuntha's¹⁷² throne of pride,—

Whose praises gods and sages sing."

But Krishna calm replied :—

"This thou hast seen ; these tidings bear

To Ugrasena's palace fair,

And tell my parents anxious there,

Of all that did betide ;

Yet see thou charge them not despair,

For soon shall they through fast and prayer,

Be raised to bliss unfailing, ne'er

Dissevered from my side.

But let the weak and young repair

To some new city 'neath the care

Of Pritha's¹⁷³ son of flowing hair,

Arjun, my comrade tried :

So still the crown shall Vajra¹⁷⁴ wear,

And so the noble name we share

Shall not have wholly died :

For Yadu's children yet shall reign

O'er peopled town and fertile plain,

Vishnu's paradise, Vaikuntha, is on the ocean of milk.

¹⁷² Pritha was wife of Pandu, and mother of the three eldest of the five princes.

¹⁷⁴ Vajra was son of Aniruddha.

Till Vishnu seek mankind again,
 And purging earth of sin and pain,
 His milk-white steed¹⁷⁵ bestride.
 But Dwaraka, her pomp is o'er,
 Her days of fate are run ;
 Her golden turrets never more
 Shall flash their beams upon the shore
 Back to the rising sun. ”

46.

So Krishna charged him, as he sate
 Expectant of the coming fate,
 By him denounced who ne'er doth bate
 Aught of his anger fierce :
 A hunter's arrow erring sped
 (That fatal iron formed its head)
 His lotus foot to pierce.
 'Twas so Durvasas¹⁷⁶ had decreed ;
 And so, from fleshly trammels freed,
 His soul, which all doth animate,
 Reverted to its pristine state.

47.

But faintly hath my spirit striven
 With earthly lips and cold ;
 Oh that to me the soul were given
 Of the godlike bards of old !

¹⁷⁵ The tenth incarnation, yet to come, is Kalki, or the rider on the white horse.

¹⁷⁶ Durvasas, the implacable sage, being offended by Krishna, foretold his death. A part of the club (see stanza 35) could not be ground to powder, and was thrown into the sea ; but it was swallowed by a fish, and recovered by a hunter.

Of him, ere Rama yet was born,¹⁷⁷
 Of Sita from her husband torn,
 Mourning in Lanka's isle forlorn,¹⁷⁸
 Of Rama's wrath, and Ravan's scorn,
 The wondrous tale who told;
 Or him who sang what kingly rite
 Did just Yudhishtir hold;
 Of Arjun's deeds, and Bhima's¹⁷⁹ might,
 And those fair twins in valour bright,
 Who stood to meet in fearful fight
 The hundred brethren bold.

48.

Then would I sing, by Krishna led
 How Yadu's sons arose;
 Their living chariots northward sped,
 Where Meru raises his awful head,
 With its crown of endless snows;
 Where the Siddhas¹⁸⁰ their flowery garlands thread,
 And odours of paradise round them shed;
 Where the river of heaven,¹⁸¹ in crystal bed,
 From the foot of Vishnu flows;

¹⁷⁷ The two great Indian epics are the Ramayana, said to have been written before Rama's birth, and the Mahabharata, or war of the Kaurava and Pandava princes. (See stanza 43.)

¹⁷⁸ Ravana, king of Lanka, or Ceylon, carried off Sita, wife of Rama. (See the "Last Ordeal of Sita.")

¹⁷⁹ Yudhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, and the Twins, were the five princes. A sacrifice held by Yudhishtira, as paramount sovereign of India, caused much of the jealousy which led to the war.

¹⁸⁰ Siddhas are demigods who dwell in the middle air.

¹⁸¹ The Ganges of heaven is the Milky Way.

Where the Rishis¹⁸² seven in glory shine ;
 And Dhruva,¹⁸³ that hermit of soul divine,
 With moveless splendour glows.

49.¹⁸⁴

Swift mounted the cars on their heavenward way ;
 By the path of the winds their journey lay,
 Where the planets roll,
 Bound to the pole
 With chains of air, that they shall not stray.
 The clouds the softest of pavements spread,
 And the lightning played harmlessly round each head ;
 The earth to view
 Still lessening grew,
 And the wheels were sprinkled with beads of dew ;
 And the chariots shone
 As they floated on,
 With rainbows of freshest hue ;
 Where Hemakut¹⁸⁵ towers with gleaming crest,
 A pillar of gold,—and on east and west
 An ocean laves
 With purple waves
 The ancient mountain's breast.

¹⁸² The seven Saints, or Rishis, are the Great Bear.

¹⁸³ Dhruva is the pole star.

¹⁸⁴ Stanza 49 is taken from the description in Act v. of *Shakuntala*.

¹⁸⁵ Hemakuta, or Golden Peak, is the residence of Kashyapa and Aditi, the parents of the gods.

50.

Yet they turned not aside to those gardens fair,
 Nor to Swarga's bowers devoid of care ;
 Nor where rises Kailasa,¹⁸⁶ a cone of white,
 Or Meru's waters to rest invite,
 Did the conquering band repair.
 For, though distant yet, to their eager sight
 Vaikuntha's portals were glowing bright,
 And they entered there through the flood of light
 No earthly eye can bear.

PART VII.

The Fall of Dwaraka.

51.

But, strong in their trust in Arjun's hand,
 From Dwaraka wandered the weeping band ;
 The weak and the timid, they journeyed away,
 And the home of their happiness desolate lay ;
 Voiceless her streets and her palaces all ;
 There was not an echo from wall to wall ;
 Silent and sad, as this earth shall be
 When her elements mix in a shoreless sea ;
 No light above, and no life below,
 Ere the winds which shall herald Creation blow,
 When all is vast, and void, and deep,
 And the soul of the Universe rests in sleep.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Kailasa is the abode of Shiva—Southey's "silver mount of Calasay."

¹⁸⁷ The sleep of the universe is the chaos between two cycles of creation.

52.

On her palaces many and white
The full moon shone with a ghastly light ;
And the scattered clouds drove hurrying past,
Like the spirits of evil which guide the blast ;
And the ocean moaned with an angry sound ;
And the muttering clouds were gathering round ;
And from heaven to earth the lightning rushed
In a line of flame, as though Indra crushed
And hurled to the depths his demon foes ;¹⁸⁸
And fiercer and fiercer the wind arose ;
And nearer and nearer the thunder crashed ;
And brighter and brighter the lightning flashed ;
And higher and higher the water swelled,
For the charm had departed their wrath which quelled,
And bound their free spirits in chains so long,
And now was the time to revenge the wrong ;—

Then wherefore do they pause ?

Why suddenly hath ceased the fierce commotion ?

Have they relented of their angry will ?

Or hath some hidden cause

Constrained the elements with mightier laws ?

For, save the heaving bosom of the ocean,

All now is hushed and still ;

And heavily, as loaded plummets drop,

The banners hang in shreds from spire and turret-
top.

¹⁸⁸ Indra, with his thunderbolt, leads the gods in their encounters with the demons.

53

No sound, no stir, no sign of life ;
More dread this stillness than the roar
Of warring winds and waves before ;
They only rest to gather strength ;
And now to direr strife
Th etempest sweeps along o'er Ocean's blackening length.
Winds and waves, at once they dash
On rampart, gate, and wall ;
Mid thunder crash
And lightning flash
They quake, they bend, they fall.
With burst of triumph onward sprung
The waters swelling high ;
They rushed the scattered blocks among,
And their white crests rejoicing flung
Against the murky sky.

54.

Like soldiers to sack of a citadel,
When the perilous breach they win,
By lofty street and ample square
The conquering tide poured in :
Battlement, rampart, and pinnacle,
Tower by tower, down they fell ;
For the billows laid siege to each castle fair,
And stormed each humbler home :
They mined beneath, and to scale the height
They tossed their angry foam ;

And they hurled vast rocks with an engine's might,
 And huge blocks they tore from their laboured site,
 And ground them to powder, and dragged them down,
 Till there was not left of that stately town
 One stone in the morning's light ;
 And the waves were ceasing to seethe and boil,
 And the winds were calming the wild turmoil,
 Victorious in the fight.

55.

Yet now at peaceful eve, as by
 This ancient shrine I stand,¹⁸⁹
 Methinks the Ocean seems to sigh
 Along the waste of sand,
 Mourning the ruthless ruin wrought
 In the unchanging past ;
 For sure so bright and holy nough
 Shall mortal view in loftiest thought,
 While Ocean's self shall last ;
 Until the fire
 Of Aurva's ire,¹⁹⁰
 In Varun's ¹⁹¹ cave that sleeps,

¹⁸⁹ The temple is said by some to be a portion of the original Dwaraka ; its antiquity is certainly very great.

¹⁹⁰ The children of the sage Bhṛigu were persecuted by the sons of King Kritavīrya. From the wrath of Aurva, grandson of Bhṛigu, proceeded a flame which would have destroyed the world, had he not, on Brahma's entreaty, confined it in the ocean ; but the time comes when it shall burst its bonds.

¹⁹¹ Varuna is god of the sea.

With riven chain
Up bursts again
From out the yawning deeps ;—
And, lifting proud his smoky crown
O'er forest dense, and ample down,
And awful mountain-steeps,
And fruitful field, and peopled town,
And rivers vast of old renown,
His lurid banner sweeps :
Until the vengeance is repaid,
By Brahma's prayers so long delayed,
And all the guiltless blood which flowed
In saintly Bhrigu's pure abode
Its just requital reaps.

56.

Till earth with sea, and sea with light,
And light with thinner air unite,
In ether air be swallowed quite,
And ether in the Infinite,
The all-pervading mind ; ¹⁹²
Which whoso learns to know aright,
And soar on high with vision bright,
Freed from illusion blind,
Will shun not pain, nor seek delight,
Nor joy in praise, nor need despite,

¹⁹² The *five* elements of the Hindus are each to be absorbed in the next grosser, and the last to be absorbed in the universal spirit.

But good and ill as one requite,
Because not diverse in his sight
Is he from all mankind.¹⁹³
He will, with meditative might,
'Gainst sense a wakeful warfare fight,
Turn passion's fierce assaults to flight;
Till, bursting links which bind
The soul to grope through error's night
From birth to birth in evil plight,
In the all-present soul his spright
Its rest eternal find.

¹⁹³ Exemption from future birth is, according to Hindu philosophy, only to be obtained by the knowledge that this spirit pervades all things, and is, in fact, one with our own and with those of others,—and that consequently all things, good and evil, are equal.

THE SONG OF KALINDI.¹⁹⁴

[The Hindus divide the year into six seasons, inserting the dewy season between winter and spring, and the rains between summer and autumn.]

1.

THE fresh wind blows from northern snows ;

The nights are dank with dew ;

A mound of fire the Simal¹⁹⁵ glows ;

The young rice shoots anew ;

In mornings cool from reedy pool

Up springs the whistling crane ;

The wild fowl fly through sunset sky ;

The sweet juice fills the cane.

Come, Krishna ! from the tyrant proud

How long shall virtue flee ?

The lightning loves the evening cloud,

And I love thee.

2.

The breeze moves slow with thick perfume

From every mango grove ;

From coral tree¹⁹⁶ to parrot bloom¹⁹⁷

The black bees questing rove ;

¹⁹⁴ Kalindi is the daughter of the Sun. (See "Destruction of the Yadavas," stanza 12.)

¹⁹⁵ Simal, the silk cotton tree. Before its leaves come, it is a mass of large red blossoms, most brilliant in the sunshine.

¹⁹⁶ Coral tree : *Erythrina fulgens* : Parijata.

¹⁹⁷ Parrot bloom : *Butea frondosa* : Palasha, from which the field of Plassey was named. Its orange scarlet pea-flower is thought to resemble a parrot's beak, from which it derives its other name of Kinshuka.

The koil¹⁹⁸ wakes the early dawn,—
 He calls the spring all day ;
 The jasmine smiles by glade and lawn ;
 The lake with buds is gay.
 Come, Krishna ! leave Vaikuntha's¹⁹⁹ bower ;
 Do thou our refuge be ;
 The koil loves the mango flower,
 And I love thee.

3.

Low from the brink the waters shrink ;
 The deer all snuff or rain ;
 The panting cattle search for drink
 Cracked glebe and dusty plain ;
 The whirlwind, like a furnace blast,
 Sweeps clouds of darkening sand ;
 The forest flames ; the beasts aghast
 Plunge huddling from the land.
 Come, Krishna ! come, beloved one !
 Descend and comfort me :
 The lotus loves the summer sun,
 And I love thee.

4.

With dancing feet glad peafowl greet
 Bright flash and rumbling cloud ;
 Down channels steep red torrents sweep ;
 The frogs give welcome loud ;

¹⁹⁸ Koil : the Indian cuckoo.

¹⁹⁹ Vaikuntha : Vishnu's paradise.

From branch and spray hang blossoms gay ;
 The wood has second birth ;
 No stars in skies, but lantern-flies
 Seem stars that float to earth.
 Come, Krishna ! in our day of gloom
 Be thou our Kalpa tree :²⁰⁰
 The wild bee loves the Padma bloom,²⁰¹
 And I love thee.

5.

The skies are bright with cloudless light,
 Like silver shells that float ;
 The stars and moon loom large by night ;
 The lilies launch their boat ;
 Fair laughs the plain with ripened grain ;
 With birds resounds the brake :
 Along the sand white egrets stand ;
 The wild fowl fill the lake.
 Come, Krishna ! let thy servants soon
 Thy perfect beauty see :
 The water-lily loves the moon,²⁰²
 And I love thee.

6.

The morning mist lies close and still ,
 The hoar-frost gems the lea ;
 The dew falls chill ; the wind blows shrill ;
 The leaves have left the tree ;

²⁰⁰ Kalpa tree : the tree of heaven, which grants every wish.

²⁰¹ Padma bloom : the white lotus.

²⁰² The white water-lily, *Nymphæa esculenta*, opens its blossoms by night, as the lotus does by day.

The crops are gone ; the fields are bare ;
The deer pass grazing by ;
And plaintive through the twilight air
Is heard the curlew's cry.
Come, Krishna ! come, my lord, my own !
From prison set me free :
The chakravaki ^{२०३} pines alone,
As I for thee.

^{२०३} Chakravaka (ki, fem.), the Brahmini duck, the Indian emblem of conjugal affection. It is supposed to be under a curse, by which it is doomed to pass the night on the opposite bank of the river to its mate, to whom it calls the whole night through.

THE PILGRIM'S RETURN FROM HARIDWARA.

[Haridwara, Anglicé Hurdwar, is the gate of Hari, or Vishnu, that is, the place where the Ganges enters the plains through the Siwalik range.]

BRIGHT river, bright river, how swiftly we glide
From the glow of the sunset borne on by thy tide !
No need for the rower to scare with his oar
The silence that sleeps on the wave and the shore.

The sun is fast sinking ; the gold of his beam
Falls level and long on the rippleless stream ;
As a saint, who hath trodden the pathway of right,
Leaves the wealth of his prayers ere he passes from sight.

All day have we shrunk from the glare of his rays,
And sought for a shelter with long wistful gaze :
But chill now and drear seems the conquering shade,
And we turn with regret to the glories that fade.

So the deeds of the holy, to angels akin,
Are not to be borne by the children of sin ;
A veil 'twixt our gloom and their brightness we cast ;—
Yet we cannot but mourn when for ever they're passed.

The clouds had o'ershadowed his face for a time,
As he bent from the height of his noontide sublime ;
But now round the path of his triumph they spread,
And bedeck it with banners of amber and red.

And thus upon earth may the soul of the saint.
 In age and in trouble grow feeble and faint ;
 But firm at the last on his road shall he tread,
 And the haloes of paradise garland his head.

No sound on the waters, no sound on the shore,
 Save the tide as it breaks on the steersman's long oar,
 Save the drone of the night-fly, and, hark ! where yon bell
 Tinkles faintly the hour of devotion to tell.

Fast deepens the twilight ; the clouds, which had shone
 In the smile of the sunlight, wax ghostly and wan ;
 Oh, what to earth's pleasures their joy can restore,
 When the soul that has shared them shall share them no more ?

In the darkness they vanish ; but see, from above
 How their bosoms are lit by the lightning they love :
 So, though purer and calmer, those joys 'twill renew
 To dream that that spirit partakes of them too.

At once round the sky, from the south to the north,
 The firmament's fires into living flash forth ;
 As a curtain of silver had half been unrolled
 For a glimpse of a citadel burning with gold.

The full moon has risen majestic and still ;
 The messenger rays speed the heaven to fill ;
 Their tidings the stars with due reverence hail ;
 At the face of their monarch their splendours they veil.

The sunset's warm glow soon deserted our track,
 As the visions of youth turn to mourning and black ;
 But before us how soft beams the light from the wave,
 Like the calmness which whispers peace in the grave !

The river,³⁰⁴ awhile by the darkness concealed,
 Bears us onward once more into vastness revealed ;
 But the eye of the wanderer scarcely can trace
 Where Ganga flows on in her heavenly race.

So the joys which the sons of mortality bless,
 Shine broad and distinct in the light of success ;
 But he who the secrets above us would know,
 Must have watched through the shadows of trouble and woe.

As the truth which our teachers in emblems declare,
 By the mystical thread the regenerate wear,—
 So twice have these sin-purging waters their birth ;³⁰⁵
 They are born in the heaven, and born in the earth.

The pathway to heaven of Sagara's sons,
 From her ice-moulded cradle how holy she runs !
 But who of her glories celestial may sing,
 Where unsullied she bursts from her heavenly spring ?

O favoured of Shiva ! 'twas only by thee
 Might Sagara's sons³⁰⁶ immortality see ;
 Other cleansing availed not for souls which were dyed
 So deep in the stains of presumption and pride.

³⁰⁴ The Milky Way.

³⁰⁵ The Brahmans, and also the two next classes, are solemnly invested with a thread, which, being considered a spiritual birth, gives them the title of twice-born. The simile, however, is scarcely Indian, as a Hindu would describe the Ganges as three-fold, including its course in Patala.

³⁰⁶ Sagara, purposing to perform an Ashwamedha, or sacrifice of a horse, as an essential part of the ceremony set at liberty the

With a vow to recover the steed of their sire,
 Forth sallied the brothers, transported with ire ;
 Six myriad princes, the earth they o'erran,
 And they pierced to the regions forbidden to man.

Down, down to Patala, they quarried their way,
 And the kingdoms unknown to the brightness of day ;
 The light gleamed unwonted on temples and domes
 And the jewelled abodes of the Nagas²⁰⁷ and gnomes.

The kings of the serpents, the ancient and wise,
 From their centuries' slumber awoke in surprise ;
 They fled to their caverns the tumult to shun,
 While the gold of their diadems flashed in the sun.

horse, which was carried off by one of the serpents of Patala. The king directed his sons by his wife Sumati, 60,000 in number, to recover the steed. Their efforts, though unavailing, were enough to alarm the gods and demons, and to insure their destruction. After penetrating deep towards the subterranean regions, they came upon the horse grazing near Kapila, an incarnation of Vishnu as a sage, whom the sons of Sagara challenged as the thief. Kapila, incensed, reduced them all to ashes with a blast from his nostrils. Anshumat, the son of Asamanjas, the son of Sagara by his other wife, Keshini, afterwards discovered the relics of his uncles, and learned from Garura, their uncle, that the waters of the Ganges were necessary to procure them admission to heaven. Neither was Sagara, nor his successors, Anshumat and Dilipa, able to effect the descent of Ganga, which was reserved for the son and successor of the latter, Bhagiratha. On the austerities of this prince successively propitiating Brahma, Uma, and Mahadeva, the Ganges was by their power compelled to flow over the earth, following Bhagiratha to the sea, and thence to Patala, where the ashes of his ancestors were laved by its waters. The Ganges was called Bhagirathi, in honour of the king, and the ocean termed Sagara, as in Saugor Island, in commemoration of Sagara and his sons.

²⁰⁷ The Nagas are snake-gods, who inhabit Patala, or the subterranean regions.

In vain were the threats and the vauntings of pride ;
Consumed by a glance of the sage they defied,
Their ashes lay strewn on the rocks of the cave,
Awaiting the touch of the life-giving wave.

For ages on ages king Sagara's heirs
Besought their salvation with penance and prayers ;
But penance and prayers were found wanting in worth,
Till Bhagiratha's merits brought Ganga to earth.

Ill brooked she to bow to a mortal's command,
But the might of devotion no will may withstand ;
So, chafing in pride of her lineage high,
On the snow-covered mountains she sprang from the sky.
Down the gullies in anger she hurriedly leapt ;
O'er the rocks and the boulders she scornfully swept ;
In her blue waving mantle, with lotuses crowned,
Divine in her beauty, she passed to the ground.

The fields of the villager burst into green,
Where the trace of her white twinkling footsteps was seen ;
Came the gods and the mortals her praises to sing,
As disdainful she followed the car of the king.

By plain and by forest rejoicing he drave,
Till his coursers he checked at the sepulchre-cave ;
Till the feet of the goddess those ashes had pressed,
And his kinsmen had passed to the realms of the blest.—

But mark where yon lamps flicker dim on the right ;
The village is near where we sojourn to-night :
Speed, rowers, speed swiftly the boat on her way,
And rest shall repay you the toils of the day.

THE MORAL OF HISTORY.

(FROM THE VISHNU PURANA.)

1.

THOU hast heard me tell, Maitreya,²⁰⁸ of the lords of
Manu's²⁰⁹ line:
Kings of wealth unbounded; heroes gifted with a soul
divine;

2.

Saints who toiled with mighty penance stains of earth to
expiate;
Sages who through years unnumbered strove against the
stream of fate;

3.

Kings and heroes, saints and sages, famous in the days of
yore;—
Thou hast heard of these, Maitreya, but their deeds are
seen no more.

4.

Yet they styled themselves the masters of the ever-
during world,
By one destiny relentless to the same destruction hurled.

²⁰⁸ Maitreya is the pupil to whom the Vishnu Purana is related
by the sage, his instructor.

²⁰⁹ Manu is the Noah of the Hindus.

5.

And by time they learn not knowledge ; each proclaims
in haughty tones,
" Mine is earth, the sea-encircled ; mine with all her
seven zones :"¹⁰

6.

" Mine they are, my race shall hold them : " each in
turn his heart beguiles ;
At the folly of her masters, Earth with autumn-blossoms
smiles.

7.

For they think not other monarchs ruled with mightier
sway of yore,
And the sons shall fall and perish, as the faths erfell
before.

8.

Kin with kin, and sires with children, strive by lust of
sway impelled,
Which the ancient kings retained not, which their
fathers have not held.

9.

Yet they love a nobler conquest, and a rule of greater
worth ;
What to him, o'er self a victor, is the ocean-girdled
earth ?

¹⁰ There are in the Hindu cosmogony seven earths, each surrounded by its own ocean of a different composition.

10.

Foolish were the kings who boasted, "Earth is mine,
mankind my slaves:"

Time, more mighty, hath o'ercome them ; silent sleep
they in their graves.

11.

Prithu, ²¹¹ o'er his foes triumphant, reigned with uni-
versal sway :

Whirled before the blast of time, like Simal-down, ²¹³ he
passed away.

12.

He who once was Kartavirya ²¹³ through all lands a
victor went :

Now the subject of a legend, and a theme for argument.

13.

Raghu's ²¹⁴ sons their rule extended to the wide world's
utmost zone,—

By the frown of the Destroyer in a moment overthrown.

²¹¹ Prithu was so famous for universal empire that the earth is from him commonly called Prithivi.

²¹² Simal is the silk cotton-tree. Its cotton is very white and beautiful, and shines like snow, after the crimson blossoms have fallen in early spring ; but it is of no practical value.

²¹³ Kartavirya, a patronymic of Arjuna, who conquered Ravana, but was slain by Parashurama.

²¹⁴ Raghu was a famous prince of the solar dynasty, king of Ayodhya, or Oudh, and ancestor of Rama.

14.

Lived they then, these potent chieftains? Where are
now the strong and brave?
Nought know we; their traces vanish, as the foam upon
the wave.

15.

When they listen to these annals, truest wisdom who
have won,
Fades ambition at the hearing as the snow before the sun.

16.

Wife and children—wealth—dominion,—deeming nought
on earth thine own,
Fix thy heart on lasting riches stored around the
Eternal Throne

THE FORCE OF NATURE.

A CROW flew over the hermitage ;
He dropped a mouse at the feet of the sage.

The sage took up the helpless thing,
And washed its wounds in the holy spring.

With a gentle hand he bore it away,
And tended its hurts through many a day.

With a father's love he loved it well :
He made it a damsel by might of spell.

She grew in beauty, she grew in grace,—
She held in his bosom a daughter's place

" My daughter is meet for a husband now :
To whom wilt thou plight thy marriage vow ? "

" Happy our life in the woodland here :
Why should I leave my father dear ? "

" The father sinneth a sin, " he said,
" Who sees not his child in honour wed. "

" If I must leave my maiden state,
The strongest of beings I choose for mate. "

They went to the sun in his noonday height :
" Sure none can equal thy glorious might ? "

How can he claim that matchless praise,
" When every cloud can hide his rays ? "

They went to the cloud rolling black from the west :

" O thunder-voiced, is thy strength the best ? "

" How is he strongest, when to and fro

As the wind may list he is forced to go ? "

They went to the wind that was shouting free :

" Unwearied of wing, is the strength with thee ? "

" How can he make so proud a claim,

When the hill is able his force to tame ? "

They went to the hill in his snowy length :

" O pillar of earth, is thine the strength ? "

" How can he boast such rank to fill,

When the little brown mouse bores his roots as he will ? "

They went to the mouse : " Enough," said she,

" The little brown mouse my lord shall be."

" The force of nature exceeds my lore ! "

He made the damsel a mouse once more.

TO THE KALKI TREE.

[The kalki tree (*Plumeria*) is planted by the Muhammadans of India over graves. Its branches are short and thick, and do not taper at all. They are often entirely leafless; but it is rarely, if ever, out of blossom. Its flowers are white, with a yellow centre,—in fragrance, as in appearance, somewhat resembling orange blossom. They are very fleshy, and thus retain their freshness long after they fall.]

WELL have our fathers done,
Tree of the silent one;
Still in thy praise shall the story be said;
Well did they, choosing thee
First of the wood to be
Watcher and guard of the graves of the dead.

Others are fairer trees,
Waving along the breeze,
Bending with mourners the wan weeping head;
Rough and uncouth thy form,
Steadfast before the storm,
Pointing to heaven from the graves of the dead.

Others have brighter hue,
Heaven's own stainless blue,
Purity's white, and affection's deep red;
Thou, with thy blossoms pale,
Scentest the evening gale,
Hallowing with incense the graves of the dead.

Others a little while
Welcome our joyous smile,
Fainting and weary ere summer is fled ;
Thou, through the wintry day,
Dost the old care repay,
Faithful and true by the graves of the dead.

Others have shadowed screen,
Where the sweet birds, unseen,
Sing the wild notes on the waving leaves read,
Thou, from thy leafless bough,
Puttest forth flowers enow,
Smiling through grief o'er the graves of the dead.

Others their treasures cast
After the bloom is past,—
Withered and scentless the gifts that they shed ;
Thou, while thou flourishest,
Givest thy first and best,
Strewing thy buds o'er the graves of the dead.

Therefore thy name we praise,
As in the former days
When on the tombs thy first offerings were spread ;
Fresh flowers day by day
Thou shalt unwearied lay,
Sentinel sure at the graves of the dead.



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THE SACRED LAWS OF THE ARYAS

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS

The LEADER of Allahabad writes:—

In his memorandum on the training of Pandits and Maulvis, submitted to the Conference of Orientalists held at Simla in July last year and published in the official report (recently printed by the Government of India), Rai Sarat Chandra Das Bahadur, C.I.E., the well-known Tibetan scholar and explorer, wrote:—

‘It was the administration of Law to Hindus according to their customs and usages which made the judicial officers of the East India Company study Sanskrit. A few works on Hindu Law, e.g., Manu, a portion of the Mitakshara and some others were therefore translated into English. But there are many Hindu law books which are not translated into English and so their contents are not known to those who are not acquainted with Sanskrit. I suggest that the translations of Hindu law books should be undertaken under the supervision of the Hindu Judges of the High Courts in India. Properly qualified European Judges may also help in this work.

‘For higher studies in Law where a student takes up Hindu or Mahomedan Law, he should be required to study it from original sources in Sanskrit or Arabic as the case may be. I also suggest that a Chair be established in every Central Law College of a province to teach Hindu and Mahomedan Law. The professors should be scholars of Sanskrit and Arabic. They should be also required to edit and translate law books existing in those languages.’

Sanskrit is a dead language and there are very few scholars in this country or outside it who possess necessary qualifications to undertake the task of critically translating Hindu Law texts. A very thorough knowledge of Sanskrit Grammar is needed for the study of any higher branch of Hindu learning and specially a technical subject like that of Law. We do not know of any one who is better qualified for such a task than Rai Śris Chandra Basu Bahadur * * * He has studied Sanskrit at Benares and produced works which have been spoken of very highly by competent Sanskrit scholars all over the world. * * *

Such a Sanskrit scholar who is as well a trained lawyer and judicial officer is best qualified for the work suggested

[Continued on page iii. of the cover.]

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